

TRAINING GUIDE FOR WAITERS & WAITRESSES

GUS'

House of Pizza

101 South Hampton Street

Kershaw, SC 29067

(803) 475-9937

GUS'

Family Pizza Restaurant

605 South Main Street

Lancaster, SC 29720

(803) 285-1552

6 Steps will help establish an effective, knowledgeable staff and should remain as focal teaching points for all employees.

1. Etiquette

These days, restaurant servers are required to perform more than just “service with a smile.” Proper etiquette includes serving female guests first, exhibiting and appropriate posture, and refraining from eating or drinking while in front of guests. These particular tips are touched on in our ***Fine Dining Etiquette for Servers*** article, but by no means does the list stop there.

An ideal server will be social and engaging as well as polite and approachable. While it may be difficult to “teach” the best social skills,

your servers should nonetheless be encouraged to make customers feel welcome. Guests are looking for a wait staff with a positive attitude, cheery disposition, and willingness to accommodate any request from the start of the meal to the very end.

An exceptional server is great at reading a customer's personality. Sometimes, this means being able to recite the entirety of the menu, specials, wine list, etc., and other times the guests are looking for romantic, undisturbed service. It's the server's job to discern this and act accordingly.

2. Appearance

A sloppy uniform can serve as a red flag for any number of new guests. The presence of stains, wrinkles, or creases suggests a disregard for professional appearance. Encourage your staff members to be mindful of their **server outfits** at all times. It also helps to have extra, clean uniforms available in the event of an improper uniform that needs to be changed.

3. Knowledge of Menu

Just as important as appearance and etiquette is a working knowledge of the restaurant and its food offerings. Even the most descriptive of menus still require clarification from time to time, and your wait staff should be as familiar as possible with the menu. The best serving staff should be able to not only explain in detail each menu item, but also possible suggestions, recite any daily specials with ease, and answer a customer's questions.

4. Knowledge of Restaurant Layout

Customer satisfaction can depend largely on two things – taste and efficiency. The latter is difficult to accomplish if your servers remain

unaware of the fastest routes to and from the kitchen, in addition to other important stops such as storage rooms, restrooms, and the emergency exits. During waiter or waitress training, be sure to identify key routes to the most important parts of the facility. Additionally, your staff will always want to be aware of the surroundings, so point out potential problem areas as well. This can include high traffic locations or places which could contain one or two “blind spots” for servers carrying full trays of food.

5. Knowledge of Restaurant Vision

Your restaurant concept and history are important and will typically remain a large part of your day-to-day operations. Make sure your employees recognize this, and can speak to the restaurant’s background, notable characteristics, or even historical accomplishments. Any effective server training program will cover each of these details. If the concept is unique enough that it brought new customers to your location in the first place, make sure your wait staff has that ability to answer questions and even provide more details and information.

6. Ongoing Training

Several of these guidelines, such as your restaurant menu and layout, may change over time, so it’s important to use all of these teaching points as a part of your ongoing training sessions for all of your servers. By implementing an ongoing training program, you have the opportunity to increase productivity, update policies to comply with new industry regulations, and improve satisfaction in a work area that’s often high in employee turnover. Some specific things to make part of long-term training include:

- Learning which menu items are the most popular, least expensive, most expensive, etc.
- Acquiring knowledge of weekly or daily specials
- Successfully selling guests on appetizers or desserts
- Finding the right balance between too much and too little interaction with guests at their table

The Top Three Waiter and Waitress Skills You Need

Skill 1: *Time Is of the Essence...*

...and being a waiter / waitress is always a race against time. From the second the guest sits down to the second you drop the check the clock is ticking. Your average guest has a hard time understanding that you also have other tables and can't imagine why they would have to wait for anything, let their food to cook. Make sure to know your cook times and what stage of the meal your guest is at (appetizer, soup / salad, entrees or dessert) at all times. Hold off on sending in entrée orders until your guests have finished their salads and appetizers. Guests do not like their main course coming to the table after they've only had a few bites of their salad. If somebody orders a well-done steak, make sure to explain (even though common sense is begging them to know already) that it will take longer to cook and thus their meal will take longer to come to the table. Never keep a guest waiting more than 5 minutes (it feels like 20 minutes to guests) for anything, especially the check.

Skill 2: *One of the most common sayings in the restaurant industry is "full hands in, full hands out."*

This means that whenever you go out on the floor to bring something to your guests, make sure to grab empty plates and cups on your way back

out. This helps keep your tables clean (and guests happy) and maximizes your efficiency. A good waiter or waitress know that the more productive they can make each trip to their tables, the easier the whole shift is going to go. If you have one table that needs bread, one that needs a new Coke, and another that needs a side of sauce, you will be putting yourself behind if you take three separate trips. Grab a tray. Fill it up.

Skill 3: Waiting tables is all about people.

To be a good waiter or waitress you will need excellent people skills – this is the most important skill if you want to start making bigger tips. A waiter’s primary job is to forge relationships with the guests, and it is not easy to walk up to a table of complete strangers and make them like you. It is very important to establish rapport with your guests and find something that you have in common. You must become a master of small talk. The most obvious thing you will have in common with your guests is food. If they order something that you like, tell them! “That is my favorite entrée, great choice!” By being honest and recommending something better you will score major points. If the guest sees that you are really trying to take care of them, then they will take care of you. Be professional, but let your personality come out.

By Using These 3 Skills...

...You will develop your Time Management, Multi-Tasking, and People Skills, you’ll greatly increase your effectiveness day in and day out. These waiter and waitress skills will enable you to give amazing service, become faster, more efficient, and more likeable. Before you know it you will have tables requesting your section and leaving great tips all the time.

Waitress Closing Duties

1. Dining Area

- Sweep under all tables
- Clear and wipe down all tables
- Vacuum
- Fix all blinds
- Turn off sign at 10:00 PM, lock both doors
- Sweep both restrooms, mop and turn off lights

2. Waitress Area

- Sweeten unsweet tea (1 cup sugar per pitcher) and clean unsweet tea urn
- WATER LETTUCE in back and front. Do not overfill bucket. Make sure the lettuce buckets are covered.
- Cover up salad bar
- Take bleach bucket to be watched
- Sweep under all machines and mop
- Do NOT turn off tea maker
- Take filters and coffee pots back to be washed. Turn off coffee machine.
- Dry and bag silverware
- Wipe down surfaces (including tea urn area)
- Count beer buckets. Count your beer bottles and leave a paper with how many bottles you have because they have to match your pulling tickets. Throw away the bottles.
- Take out trash and replace bag
- Refill house dressing pourers
- TURN OFF ALL AC's

Saturday Night Closing Only Additions

- Move all tables in dining room and vacuum under them
- Scrub tables with SOS
- Move metal tea catcher because it gets sticky underneath it

9 Tips for a Waiter / Waitress in Training

Tip #1: *Be on time.*

Better yet, show up early.

Yes, I know it's incredibly obvious and trust me, it feels completely ridiculous saying it, but I cannot stress this enough. Punctuality is essential when starting a new job. It's one of the first impressions your employers and coworkers will get of you. Show up late and they'll all think that you're disrespectful and don't really care about the job. If anything happens and you can't make it on time or can't show up at all then pick up the phone and call them.

Tip #2: *Listen to your trainer.*

Even if you've seen it all and are highly qualified for your position, listen to what your trainer has to say. Different restaurants work with different systems and you really need to pay attention to the differences between this job and your previous ones. The whole "Yeah, yeah, I know" attitude should be left at the door. Let your trainer explain things first and then ask questions later.

Tip #3: *Pick up the pace.*

When starting at a new restaurant, some servers have a hard time picking up the rhythm of the restaurant and the speed of the service. When changing to a busier restaurant, it's time to get your butt in gear

and pick up the pace. Walking around the restaurant like you're taking a nice stroll in the park is not going to work. Keep in mind – your trainer will push you, and rightfully so. Keep up with their pace and don't waste time. If you find your trainer moving quicker than you then you're the one who needs to adjust their rhythm.

Tip #4: *Be ready for great work.*

You're new, right? So you'll have to do a lot of the crappy jobs that people hate doing like preparing linens, silverware and glassware, filling condiments, restocking napkins, etc. Your trainer will make you clean their section, run their plates, and do any other cleaning duties or tasks they may have in store. You'll have to really prove yourself, so don't ever slack off or sneak off in back for a cigarette.

Get rid of the cellphone and concentrate on working and working hard. Don't even think about complaining. Your trainer and employers may be testing your limits to see how much you want the job and how much you can take. Also, you may get all the crummy shifts and hours that nobody wants. Be ready to take whatever shifts / sections / tables they give you.

Tip #5: *Remember: Staff members will be hard on you.*

Because you're working in an industry where your coworkers rely on tips as their income, other waiters and waitresses will be hard on you if you make mistakes at their tables or if you're in their way. It's very possible that you'll get snide comments or brushed off so be prepared for that. If you're doing something wrong, chances are someone is going to tell you. Whether you're testing your limits to see how much you want the job and how much you can take. Also, you may get all the crummy shifts and hours that nobody wants. Be ready to take whatever shifts / sections / tables they give you.

Tip #6: Avoid asking questions that will make you look bad.

I don't mean don't ask questions.

You should be asking a lot of questions to show a genuine interest in learning the job and the correct way of doing things. What I mean is you should avoid asking questions that make it seem like you don't care about the job or don't even want to be there.

Questions like:

“What time do I finish?”

This is my most hated question. You're barely working 5 minutes and you're already thinking about when you're leaving. If you need to know for important reasons, that's different, but find a way to make it seem like you don't want to get out of there as soon as possible.

“Do I really have to do that?”

Your trainer is telling you that you need to do something. Just do it! They wouldn't be telling you “You have to clean the chair legs before every shift” if you didn't need it to be done.

“Can I eat something?”

Um, you're at work. You're supposed to be working, not eating. Eat before or after your shift, not in the middle of training.

Tip #7: Know your schedule.

Not showing up for a training because you didn't know you were working is unacceptable. It's not only frustrating for the restaurant, but for you as well. They will most likely not have you back. When getting your schedule for training, make sure you double check that you have

the correct days and hours. Get the phone number to contact the person giving you your hours so that you can call in case you're unsure. Be prepared. There are no excuses.

Tip #8: *Focus on your job.*

The worst thing you can do is start yapping away with coworkers about what you did that weekend or telling your life story to your trainer while you should be paying attention to your customers and what you should be learning. Talking and telling stories will distract you from ordering food on time, seeing new tables being seated in your section, and remembering customers' requests. Stay focused. Be friendly, but your priority is work, not socializing.

Tip #9: *Smile.*

It's really important to show that you're happy to be there and working so smile! Also, it shows everyone that you are capable of having a good relationship with the customers, that you're friendly, and easy to work with. A smile can go such a long way so don't forget to let it shine.