

## ***Operations:***

## **Introduction to Dining Room**

**Length of Class: 1-2 sessions**

**Class Duration: 60-75 minutes each**

**Lecture: 60 minutes**

**Instructor Demo: 25 minutes**

**Student Activity: 65 minutes**

***Optional Videos: 15 minutes each***

***Optional Student Activity: 30 minutes***

***Optional Quiz: 10 minutes***

**Student Objectives:**

• Identify three basic styles in dining service

• Define side work and provide at least three examples of server side work

• Describe importance of sections, table numbers and position numbers

• Define the term “on point”

• List at least four traditional front-of-the house positions and describe how they interact with each other

• Demonstrate the correct procedure for pre-setting a table for a three-course meal

• List two reasons why product knowledge is vital to the server

• Demonstrate the correct way to serve, clear and present the check to the customer

• Define the terms up-selling and suggestive selling

**TEKS Alignment:**

**Culinary Arts:**

(3)(D); (6)(F),(L); (8)(A),(B); (11)(G),(H)

**Practicum in Culinary Arts I:**

(2)(A),(E),(G),(H); (9)(A),(B),(D); (10)(F),(L)

**Restaurant Management:**

(2)(D,(E); (5)(B),(C),(D),(E); (6)(F); (7)(A),(B),(D); (11)(A)

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

***Operations:***

**Introduction to Dining Room**

# Lecture Guide

***Instructor’s Note:*** *This lesson should precede any dining room simulation or service.*

I. Styles of service

A. French (tableside)

B. Russian (butler service from platters)

C. American (kitchen plated)

D. Butler service (formal reception style)

E. Counter service (quick-service restaurants)

F. Self-assisted service (buffet restaurants)

***Instructor’s Note:*** *This lesson plan will focus only on American-style table service.*

II. Fundamentals of dining room preparation ***See****: Foundations of Restaurant Management & Culinary Arts, Level I, p. 621*

A. Personal hygiene and grooming

1. Hair/make-up

2. Hands and nails

3. Uniform/name tag

4. Shoes

5. Personal tools (pens, corkscrews, banks, etc.)

B. Side work—Work in addition to those tasks directly related to serving the

guest; may be assigned prior to opening, after opening, during slow times

or between meal periods

1. Examples of side work

a) Portioning condiments and dressings

b) Brewing tea and coffee

c) Folding napkins

d) Ironing table linens

e) Preparing plate garnishes

f) Vacuuming

2. Side work is commonly shared and rotated among all servers. Side work

schedules should be posted daily or weekly by the manager.

C. Sections—Although invisible to the guest, each dining room floor plan is

divided into sections; usually with table numbers and corresponding position

or seat numbers assigned to each table’s seat. This system, often referred to

as the pivot point system, allows for fast, accurate and effective communication

among the restaurant staff. For example

1. Table numbers usually follow a logical numeric pattern that divides the

number of seats equally among the service staff.

2. These table numbers are divided into convenient geographic patterns

that provide for ease, efficiency of service and smooth traffic flow.

3. The table numbers and position numbers allow the kitchen and the

dining staff to communicate effectively about specific guest requests

and needs by simply referencing table and table position numbers

indicated on the guest check.

***See****: Foundations of Restaurant Management & Culinary Arts, Level I, p. 633*

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

4. Table and position numbers allow busy servers a reference tool to ensure

the correct order is delivered to the correct table and guest. There is

nothing more unprofessional than “auctioning” food to guests at the table.

5. Position numbers enable servers to handle separate checks at the same

table with greater ease.

6. An assigned section empowers and holds the servers and server support

staff responsible and accountable for the smooth and effective operation of

those tables and ultimately the satisfaction of their customers.

7. Although specific individuals bear accountability, team attitudes make

everyone a winner. Those establishments that encourage others to assist

co-workers in the weeds and focus on overall team standards and guest

satisfaction are the most successful at customer retention. A customer

with a need or request who is ignored or diffidently told, “Sorry, this is

not my section” is a customer who will not return.

8. Each restaurant will have different standards as to how the tables in each

section are pre-set for the customer’s arrival and seating. These activities

include resetting tables, general cleaning, refreshing and replacing

condiments.

9. “On point” refers to the established alignment of tables and chairs

within the restaurant, but also refers to the exact standards for the

placement of flatware, china, napkins, centerpieces and other items

that will be pre-set or set during the course of the customer’s dining

experience. Alignment, familiarity and symmetry are all pleasing and

reassuring to the guest. Check “on point” settings from the vantage

point of the seated customer.

***Instructor Demonstration:*** *At this juncture the instructor should demonstrate to the students the informal table setting to be used during dining room simulations, to include:*

*• Correct placement of tablecloths*

*• Leveling of tables*

*• Correct arrangement and distancing of flatware for a three-course meal,*

*including forks, spoons and knives*

*• Correct placement of wine and water glasses, coffee setups*

*• Correct arrangement of pre-set china, including b&b plates and butter knives*

*• Correct arrangement of centerpieces and condiment dispensers*

*• Several napkin-folding techniques, including the signature fold for your*

*dining room*

*• The correct placement of napkins*

*• Checking for polish and cleanliness of table setting and surrounding area*

***Student Activity:*** *The instructor should break the class into teams to allow students to practice “on point” table settings and napkin folding with the instructor’s supervision and coaching.*

***Instructor Demonstration:*** *The instructor should demonstrate the customized wait station setup for your dining area and thoroughly explain who, where, how and how many setups will be prepared prior to service. The instructor should provide the students with a seating and table chart and explain its use.*

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

III. Traditional staffing at American full-service restaurants

A. Mâitre d’hôtel (or seating host)

B. Captain

C. Waiter

D. Runner (optional)

E. Expeditor

F. Busperson

G. Wine steward (optional)

IV. Product knowledge

A. Each member of the dining staff must know the menu by heart.

B. Every waitperson must be knowledgeable about each menu item; its

preparation technique, its ingredients, correct pronunciations, effective

selling descriptions and complementary side dishes and beverages.

C. Waitstaff, in the absence of a wine steward (Sommelier), must be

knowledgeable about the wine list along with items from the bar such as

brands of beer and common cocktails. The waiter should have a command of

pronunciation of the beverage menus and be able to provide sound guidance

to the customer regarding complementary food pairings.

D. Take a copy of the menu and wine list home with you and review it

constantly. Remember, unlike other retail stores, customers have made a

decision to purchase when they walk in the establishment’s door. They are not

window-shopping. Members of the wait staff are expert consultants to the

guest first, and salespeople second. Customer satisfaction is the ultimate

goal, not seeing how high you can run up the tab. Help guide the selections,

read your customers’ cues, both verbal and non-verbal.

E. Know the specials, be honest with your customers, and know in advance if

any items on the menu are or will soon be “86ed” (unavailable) and have

substitute suggestions in mind. ***See****: Effective Communication Lesson, FS Prep 4th Edition*

V. The service cycle

A. Showtime—Most dining is viewed as a form of entertainment; a diversion or

a special event, like going to see a play or movie. The dining room is a stage

and members of the wait staff are the principle players in the customers’ eyes.

What comes out of the kitchen is still the principle focus, but the wait staff is

what makes the dining experience come alive for the customer. Treat your

section as if you are the CEO of your own business. Know your regular

customers by name. Make each customer welcome with a warm, prompt

greeting and VIP service. Size up the table and determine what kind of

occasion customers are there for and how to tailor your service to that table.

An out-of-town guest dining alone may want to engage you in casual

conversation, while a couple celebrating a romantic evening or a table talking

business may want you to be attentive but as invisible as possible. Make sure

your station is set, stocked and ready to go before the door opens.

B. Line-up—A line-up is a brief pre-opening meeting prior to the meal period.

The maitre d’, a kitchen representative and often the general manager usually

conduct it. The wait staff is inspected for proper uniform attire, grooming

and personal cleanliness. At this time, the staff will discuss

1. The specials, their contents and prices and a tasting

2. Changes in the menu

3. Changes in ticket times

4. Staffing or section changes

5. Potential “86” situations and planned substitutions

6. Items that receive special promotional considerations

7. A question-and-answer session

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

C. Seating the guest

1. Is usually done by a maitre d’ or host.

2. Is accompanied by the menu presentation.

3. In self seating restaurants, the waiter is usually the first to make contact

and provide menu presentations.

4. In counter service settings, menus are often posted and the guest places

the order with a greeter/cashier. The food may be picked up by the

customer at the counter or delivered by a designated waitperson.

D. Beverage service

1. Offer the guests beverage service while they are looking over the menu.

2. Cocktails are ordered by the captain or waiter from the service bar and

served immediately.

3. Beverage service offers the first opportunity to “up-sell” the customer

through brand loyalty. For example: should the customer order a martini,

you may ask them what brand of gin or vodka they prefer. Chances are

the customer will order a premium brand, and increase the check average.

If your establishment has an extensive wine list, chances are good that

you will have a designated wine steward to present the wine list and help

the customers with their selection.

E. Taking the customers’ order

1. Be patient and prepared to answer questions.

2. If the customers are not ready to order, read the table and look for the

opportunity to suggestively sell some appetizers to the table. Take a

moment to elaborate about the specials. If customers are not ready, offer

to come back in a few minutes.

3. Listen carefully, and use correct table numbers, position (chair) numbers

and abbreviations when taking down the information on a pad or guest

check. This information is your lifeline to the kitchen and your guide to

smooth table service.

F. Placing the order

1. Each operation will have its own system for placing orders.

2. Most operations will have a point-of-sale (POS) system that provides

computerized ordering to the kitchen and bar. Double check your order

before transmitting to the kitchen.

3. Most busy kitchens will have an expeditor (expo) whose job is to facilitate

orderly communication between the wait staff and the line. Upon entering

the kitchen, the expo will be the only person you communicate with in

order to improve efficiency and eliminate confusion. The expo will then,

in turn, communicate your order and special requests to the kitchen line.

G. Timing the order (it’s the server’s responsibility)

1. Meal period

• Breakfast—Fast paced, 10-minute check time

• Lunch—Fast to moderate, 15-25-minute check time

• Dinner—More leisurely paced, 45-minute, 2-hour check time, depending

on number of courses and customer’s pace (60 minutes is an average

dining time at dinner)

2. Ordering—This is either done electronically via the POS system, verbally with the expo, or both.

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

3. Firing—The server is aware of each course the guests have ordered and is

observing the table’s consumption rate. The server is also aware of the aver-

age preparation time for each one of the menu items. The server realizes that

a well-done 8 oz. filet will take approximately 30 minutes from the time it is

fired by the line. The server also realizes that an order of fried shrimp ordered

at the same table will take only 10 minutes to prepare. The server must fire

these items by table number based on preparation time and the server’s

judgment about when the guests will be ready for the next course. Be aware

of factors that can slow down your timing:

• Is the kitchen short staffed or does it have new staff in key positions?

• Is there a banquet or large table?

• Have there been major changes on the menu?

• Is the kitchen in the weeds?

4. Always make sure the order you are picking up is yours! Check your

ticket and table number!

H. Serving Rules

1. Serve from the left

2. Drinks to the right

3. Hold the plate with the heel of your thumb, keep your fingers off the plate

4. Serve the plate with the principal part of the entrée facing the guest

5. Never “auction” plates

6. Serve females first in clockwise rotation, then serve males (unless there

is a guest of honor)

7. If possible, always use a clean side towel when serving

8. Bring all the table’s food at the same time

9. Inform the guests about hot plates

10.Monitor beverage levels

11.Be prepared for any eventuality, including spills, dropped silverware,

napkins and crumbs

I. Clearing rules

1. Remove plates and glasses from the right

2. Wait until all parties have finished a course before clearing

3. Always have a covered tray jack and tray close to the table to clear

4. Clear as quickly and quietly as possible

5. When in doubt, ask the guests’ permission to clear

J. Marketing the extras

1. Dessert

• Pre-ordered desserts, such as soufflés, lock the guest into the final

course before the entrée is served.

• Prix fixe menus that include a dessert bring added value to the meal and

open the door to additional after-dinner extras.

• Dessert trays, strategically placed before the meal, entice customers to

plan on dessert

• Offer the dessert menu immediately after the entrée, before the customers

begin to feel satiated and “too full.” Keep the momentum going.

2. Beverages

• Simultaneously suggest specialty coffees and after-dinner drinks to com-

plement dessert. Don’t be shy about allowing customers to “split” desserts.

• Offer specialty coffees, teas and after-dinner digestifs in lieu of dessert.

This point in the meal offers some of the best opportunities to up-sell,

suggestive-sell and cross-sell.

Foodservice Prep

*Texas Restaurant Association*

*Education Foundation*

3. Check preparation and presentation

4. Method of check presentation is both company policy and regionally

variable. In the American South, the check is generally presented to the

host immediately following dessert. In the North, it would be considered

rude of the waiter to present the check without the host’s specific request.

5. Be familiar with your operation’s processing of all forms of payment

• Cash

• Credit card

• Check

• Gift certificate

• Tabs

6. Remember, service doesn’t stop once the guests have paid; keep coffee

and water refills coming and don’t miss the chance for extra sales by

being willing to open a new check should the customers change their

minds. Make sure to be present when they depart, remember their names

and remind them of yours. Make sure to attend to any special departing

needs and look around the table for forgotten or misplaced items before

they exit. Above all, don’t forget to sincerely thank them for their business.

***Optional Student Activity:*** *After dining room tables have been set, divide the students into teams and have them role play the service of a three-course meal with half the students being the customers and the other half being the service staff. Have “the customers” evaluate the sales staff performance and then have the teams switch roles.*

**Reading Assignment:** To be determined by instructor.

**Video Recommendations:** *Server Skills: Serving People* and/or *Building Foodservice Sales: Suggestive Selling*, NRAEF.

**Additional Resources:** *Foundations of Restaurant Management & Culinary Arts, Level I*, © 2011, National Restaurant Association and published by Pearson Education, Inc., Chapter 10, pp. 652-666.

*Professional Dining Room Management, 2nd Edition*, King, © 1988 John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Chapter 4.

*At Your Service; A Hands On Guide to the Professional Dining Room*, John Fischer, The Culinary Institute of America, © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

*Design and Equipment for Restaurants and Foodservice; A Management View*, Second Edition, Katsigris and Thomas, © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.