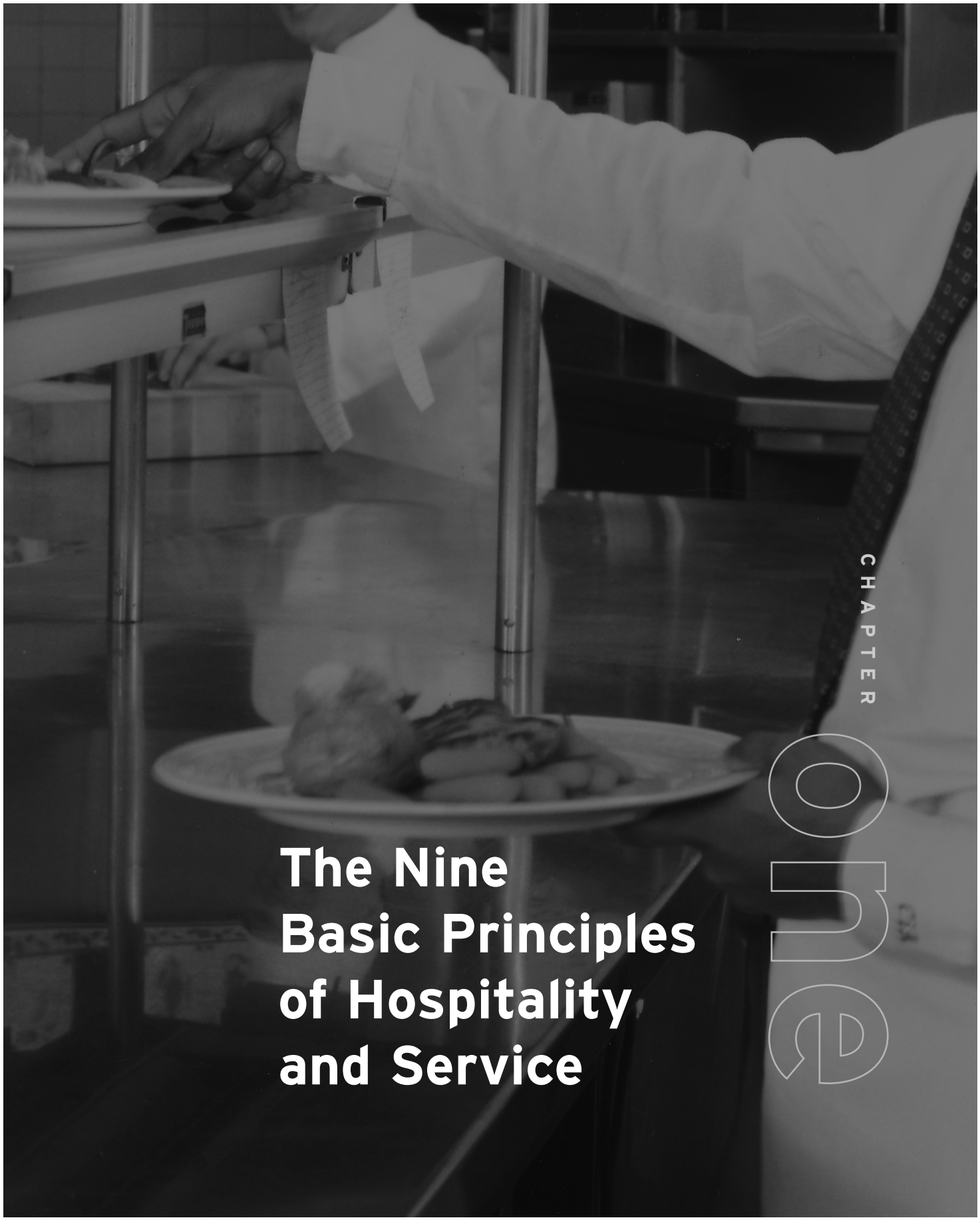


CHAPTER one

The Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service

Attributes of Remarkable Service

Remarkable Service:

- Is welcoming, friendly, and courteous
- Is knowledgeable
- Is efficient
- Is well timed
- Is flexible
- Is consistent
- Communicates effectively
- Instills trust
- Exceeds expectations

To entertain a guest is to be answerable for his happiness so long as he is beneath your roof. *— Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, 1825*

The Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service may seem to refer to different kinds of acts, but in fact they constitute a code of service that encompasses taking care of the guest or customer. Providing service is at the heart of any business, from auto repair to hairdressing to restaurants. The more intimate the customer's involvement, the more crucial this factor is to the success of the business. Dining is a very personal activity, with many emotional as well as rational factors. A high level of caring for the comfort of guests—Remarkable Service, in other words—is the distinctive attribute of the best dining establishments. Remarkable Service makes guests feel comfortable, and it makes dining out enjoyable.

"I DECIDED TO TRY BREAKFAST AT THE COUNTER OF A NEW DINER IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD. Everything was fine, nothing special; it was just a diner, after all. About a week later I went back, and the waitress repeated my entire order from the first visit, including crisp bacon, and asked if I wanted the same thing. Now that's a very special diner! And I'm a regular customer because I wasn't just another guy at the counter."

To comply with Brillat-Savarin's dictum, servers must not only physically provide the food and drinks guests desire but also ensure the guests' enjoyment by providing a haven from annoyances that might spoil enjoyment of the meal, such as loud music or the clattering of dishes. Remember, servers must not only cater to the expressed needs of the guests but anticipate unspoken needs as well.

In addition to being a guide to practical, how-to issues of service, the Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service also underlie the less tangible aspects of service. Less tangible does not mean less important. In fact, attention to these details is exactly what characterizes Remarkable Service. In today's competitive

market, the quality of the service is as important as the food—sometimes even more important—in determining how well a restaurant will fare, whether it's a high-end dining palace or a neighborhood diner.

Remarkable Service Is Only as Good as It Looks, or First Impressions Matter

"You only have one chance to make a good first impression" has become the mantra for quality-oriented service businesses. In the restaurant business, judgments that can alter the entire dining experience are made by guests within minutes of their arrival. A good server never forgets this oft-quoted but still valid adage.

When a restaurant—including the physical plant, decor, furnishings, equipment, and staff—presents a clean and neat appearance, it banishes any worries guests might have about sanitary conditions in the part of the restaurant they can't see, the kitchen. Even a single grease stain on the carpet, a crumb on a chair, or a spot on the wall can turn guests off about the meal they came expecting to enjoy. Stubbed-out cigarette butts on the sidewalk or dirty windows send a very powerful negative message to would-be customers.

The Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service will be referred to throughout this book. Since they represent various aspects of service and share the goal of making the guest feel comfortable, it should come as no surprise when two or more of the principles overlap. Together they all form a code of service.

Remarkable Service Is Welcoming, Friendly, and Courteous

A warm, friendly welcome assures guests that they can relax and enjoy their meal. By the same token, a warm good-bye makes guests feel appreciated and encouraged to return.

Good servers are sensitive to guests' needs, not only as to the dishes served but also in terms of the entire dining experience. Few guests come to a restaurant to chat with the service staff; most want to converse with their companions. Regular customers may develop an informal relationship with the staff; some may even

think of the restaurant as their second dining room or home away from home. Good manners smooth uncertain social interactions, subconsciously informing people that they have nothing to fear. Courteous behavior creates an atmosphere of comfort, so guests know what to expect.

WHAT'S NAVARIN?

A guest sees an unfamiliar word, navarin, on the menu and asks, "What's navarin?" The knowledgeable server replies, "It's a stew, a kind of ragout. We make it with aromatic vegetables—onion, carrot, and celery—and herbs. The meat is braised, or cooked slowly, in stock and wine until tender. The chef prepares a sauce from the braising liquid."

Remarkable Service Is Knowledgeable

Guests often request information about menu items or wines. Servers who are knowledgeable about the menu (ingredients and preparation of the menu items, presentation, wines, and the like) can provide the help they need to order from the menu and the wine list. Servers can—and should—list specials of the day and other dishes not on the menu to help guests make informed decisions about their meal. Guests cannot order dishes they don't know exist.

A remarkable server not only has to know how to answer the guest's question but also must guess what the guest really wishes to find out. For example, a guest asks what is in the spinach-and-goat-cheese quiche. While the server could reply, "Spinach and goat cheese," which is technically accurate, it is far from hospitable and doesn't tell the customer what he wants to know, which is probably if there is garlic or onion in the quiche. The server should tell the guest what else is in the dish, especially if there is garlic or onion or nuts, which some customers have allergies or aversions to.

Remarkable Service Is Efficient

Efficiency is important to the servers and to the restaurant for obvious reasons; for one, more work can be done (and more money made) with less effort. And when guests see the servers working quickly, smoothly, and easily, they feel at ease. Disorganization and unseemly haste are contagious.

Inefficient technique wastes everybody's time. It interrupts the flow of the meal and erodes the environment of trust. Attention to the mise en place (having everything in its place), an intelligent economy of motion, and a cooperative attitude all make the server's job easier to perform.

Remarkable Service Is Well Timed

Remarkable servers anticipate the dining needs of the guests. This means providing just the right items or services before the guests even realize they need them.

- Orders should be taken within a reasonable time after the guests are seated and have had time to peruse the menu.
- Flatware should be in place before the guest needs it; nothing is more frustrating for a guest than to look at dessert and not have a fork or spoon to eat it with.
- Guests should not have to wait a long time between courses. Careful timing of the delivery of each course ensures that guests will get their food while it is at its freshest and at its ideal temperature.
- Guests should not have to ask for refills of water or iced tea, bread or butter.
- Coffee should not sit cooling in front of the guests while they wait for cream and sugar to be brought to the table. Cream and sugar should precede the coffee or tea.
- The check should be delivered smoothly, quietly, and unobtrusively when the guests have finished and indicated that they are ready to pay.
- Guests should never be made to feel rushed. However, when guests are in a hurry—when they need to be in theater seats by curtain time, for example, or when they are traveling—whatever is needed to pace the meal should be done so that the guests can enjoy their meal in the time at their disposal.

"WHILE DRIVING CROSS-COUNTRY I STOPPED FOR A QUICK BREAKFAST. The informal restaurant I entered obviously catered to travelers, as it was located just off the exit of a major interstate highway. I sat down, and the server offered to pour coffee—decaf or regular—and gave me the menu. As soon as I had lifted my eyes from the menu the server was there to take my order. In just a matter of minutes the breakfast was in front of me—hot and perfectly prepared. The server also put down the check at the same time as my meal, saying, 'I'll be happy to bring you anything else, but I am giving you the check now in case you're in a hurry.' I didn't feel rushed; I felt well served. The service perfectly fit the circumstances."

Remarkable Service Is Flexible

Remarkable Service consists of more than adhering to a set of principles. Sometimes the rules must be bent a little. A guest might ask, for example, for an appetizer and a salad instead of an appetizer and an entrée or to have the courses out of the menu sequence, such as a salad after the entrée instead of before. Some guests prefer to pour the wine themselves for their table. This happens frequently in wine country; it is an easy request to accommodate. If two guests are deeply

involved in a conversation, common sense suggests that one should be served from the right and one from the left. Sound judgment provides the best guides as to when and where flexibility is called for.

Remarkable Service Is Consistent

People go to a restaurant the first time for many different reasons. They come back for only one: They like the restaurant, its food, and its service. Making good use of the Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service can induce someone to come back to the restaurant once, but consistently high-quality food and service is the only way to bring in repeat business. Uneven service does not encourage return visits. A single episode of bad service, even when no fault of the server—two cooks called in sick, the refrigerator broke down—will discourage the people who experienced it from coming back. Word of mouth will do the rest. The key to long-term success is Remarkable Service, delivered to every guest, every day, every week, every month, every year.

Remarkable Service Communicates Effectively

The art of communication consists of transmitting just the right amount of information exactly when it is needed. When a server describes specials that don't appear on the menu or offers suggestions about additional dishes or beverages that might enhance the dining experience, the diner is well served. The waiter might suggest a side dish to go with a steak, for instance: "Many of our guests like to have a blooming rose with their steak. It's a deep-fried whole onion that opens up like a rose when it's cooked."

"WE WERE HALFWAY THROUGH OUR MAIN COURSE, AND MY WINEGLASS WAS EMPTY, though everyone else had plenty. I didn't want to order another bottle of wine. I must have been sending some kind of signal, because the waiter came to me and told me they had a wine by the glass that would be just perfect with my steak."

Remarkable servers recognize what guests want to know and provide the information in an unobtrusive manner. Rather than an ostentatious flaunting of knowledge, which can make guests uncomfortable and irritated because they feel condescended to, a tactful delivery of the facts best serves the purpose.

While some guests respond well to humor, others prefer more distance. Remarkable servers adapt their communication style to the situation and the guests with whom they are

speaking. The type of establishment very often determines the form and style of conversation between servers and guests. Diners, family places, bistros, and white-tablecloth restaurants all develop different communication styles.

Remarkable servers are always "reading the table" for clues about what guests might need. A guest turns his head, for example, and the alert server is at his elbow instantly to see what he needs—an extra side dish, an extra plate to share food, or more cheese.

Effective communication is accomplished by other means as well. Uniforms set a tone for a restaurant, establishing at a glance a style of communication that both servers and guests understand. Polo shirts and khakis convey a casual feel, while long French aprons denote a higher level of formality.

Remarkable Service Instills Trust

A state of trust must be established between the server and the guest. The guest wants to feel secure that menu items are described accurately and that health and sanitary codes are observed. For example, when guests order decaffeinated coffee, they have only the server's word that they are, in fact, getting decaffeinated coffee. If a guest notices that the coffee machine has only two carafes, both with a brown handle, which indicates regular coffee, rather than orange or green, which usually indicates decaffeinated, doubts take shape that can undermine the relationship of trust established during the rest of the meal. Similarly, if a guest who is allergic to garlic asks if a dish contains garlic and is told no, eats it, and wakes up in the middle of the night with palpitations, that guest is not going to return to that restaurant. A bond of trust is central to return business.

Remarkable Service Exceeds Expectations

Repeat customers expect the same basic level of service each time they visit, but remarkable servers are constantly seeking ways to better the experience. The best service is constantly improving service. Little touches, such as recalling a guest's name or offering a toy to a child, are sure to be remembered. When something goes wrong, such as a reservation mix-up, an apology is called for, but the manager's offer of a complimentary glass of wine is doubly appreciated, precisely because it exceeds expectations.

A Brief History of Table Service

The Nine Basic Principles of Hospitality and Service may seem straightforward, but they have not always been the rules of the profession. Table service is a noble profession, one that has had a long and varied history, and it has been shaped by that history.

Table service evolved with changes in social structure, architecture, and the foods that were served. By comparing the foods and ways our ancestors ate, especially when they dined in banquets, with our own customs, today's dining habits, whether in formal dining rooms, bistros, or family restaurants, can be better understood—even some of the bizarre jargon used in today's kitchens and dining rooms, which has its roots in the past.

THE ANCIENT WORLD: GREECE

The earliest written descriptions of recognizably Western dining scenes are found in the Old Testament and in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. In reading these accounts, it is obvious that it was the status of the diners that counted. Until fairly recent times, writers (for the most part) did not write about ordinary, everyday life. They wrote for and about the rich and powerful, describing banquets and special occasions attended by people of high social status.

Greek banquet (©Bettmann/Corbis)

By 400 BCE the Greek banquet had become standardized, with a fixed structure for the dishes served and the manner in which they were to be served. Banquets were generally held in private homes, as the Greeks had very few public eating places. Dining rooms were small, con-

taining couches for the guests. Rooms were described by the number of couches they contained. Usually these feasts took place in a five-couch room, with a small table in front of each couch.

A basket containing a selection of breads made of wheat or barley was placed on each table. Servants brought large dishes from the kitchen, and guests chose their favorite portions, tossing scraps, shells, and bones onto the table.

MIXING-BOWLS, OR *KRATERES.*

Krater. Wine mixed with water tableside in a krater, a large clay pot with a wide mouth, was served with the desserts.
(Courtesy of Culver Pictures)

The meal was divided into three parts. The first part or course might include fruit, poultry, salted seafood, and small savory meat dishes, much like the Greek *mezze* of today. These light dishes were followed by heartier fare—fresh seafood and roasted meats, such as lamb or baby goat.

After this course, the tables were removed with all the bones and other debris, and new tables were brought out. Servants circulated with towels and basins of warm water scented with precious oils for the guests to clean their hands.

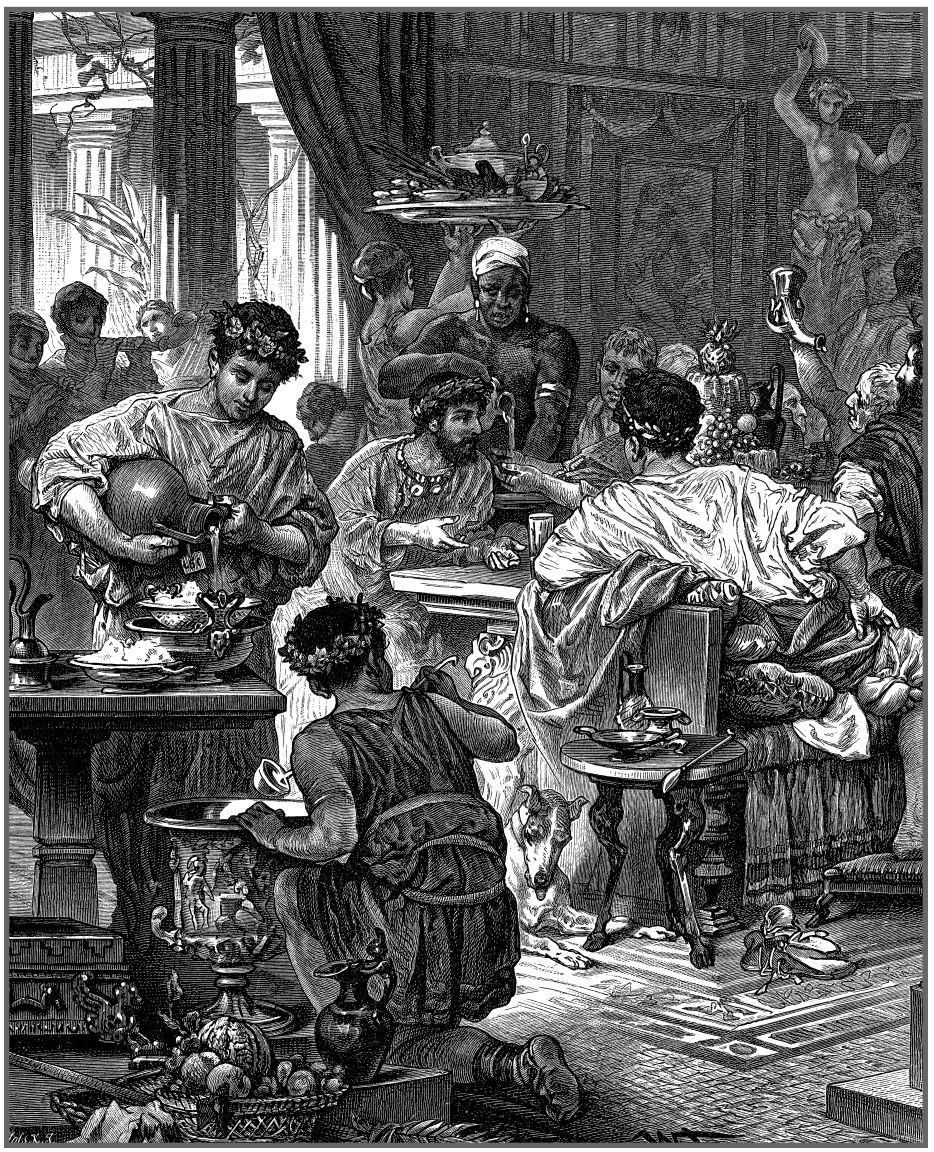
Desserts were then served. These might include dried and fresh fruits, cheeses, nuts, and small pastries or other confections. Wine mixed with water tableside in a krater, a large clay pot with a wide mouth, was served with the desserts. Diluted wine was considered healthier than water, and drunken behavior (during the early stages of the meal, at least) was discouraged.

After the desserts the soiled tables were removed once again, signaling the end of the meal and the beginning of the symposium, a convivial party with a mix of literary and philosophical discussions, music, and performances by acrobats and female dancers, accompanied by the drinking of unmixed wine.

THE ANCIENT WORLD: ROME

The Romans adopted a great deal of Greek culture, including the culinary arts, taking Greek ideas about the meal merely as a starting point. They used more-complex recipes, more-elaborate presentations, more kinds of seasonings and more of them, and more imported ingredients.

Roman families often dined together. There were strict rules governing the position of each diner, based upon status. The head of the household always had the most prestigious spot. Guests also took their places according to status. Just to be invited to dine often signaled sought-after social recognition. Who was invited by whom, who accepted an invitation, and to whom one appealed for an invitation said much about power in ancient Rome.



Roman banquet
(Courtesy of Culver Pictures)

The Roman dining room was called a *triclinium*; it contained three couches, each for three diners, arranged in a **U** shape. Diners rested on their left sides, their left elbows propped up on cushions. The legs of the second diner on the couch were behind the cushion on which the first diner rested, and the legs of the third were behind the cushion of the second. This left the right hand free to choose from the platters of food, carried from the kitchen on discuses. Each guest ate from a red pottery bowl or dish, such as the then-famous Samian ware.

A Roman dinner consisted of three courses. The first, the *gustum*, was similar to our hors d'oeuvre. It was served with *mulsum*, a light wine mixed with honey. The *gustum* was followed by the *mensa primae*, or first table, as in the sequence of the Greek banquet. Red wine mixed with water accompanied the *mensa primae*. The next course was the *mensa secundae*, or second table. This course included a dessert of fruits and sweets—and the first unwatered wines of the meal. This was the time for entertainment and for serious drinking to begin, as in the Greek symposium.

The Middle Ages Through the Renaissance

The hierarchy of power and status was reflected in medieval banquets as well. In Anglo-Saxon times meals were large-scale affairs, taking place in the main hall of a castle; there were no rooms reserved solely for dining. Although some tables were permanent, most consisted of boards laid across heavy trestles or sawhorses (the origin of the modern sense of *board* as "daily meals," as in "room and board") and dismantled after the meal. Tables were arranged in a **U**, and the head of the household and honored guests sat at a table elevated on a dais. The table was covered with a white cloth and an overcloth called a sanap in English.

Salt cellar with Neptune and Tellus by Benvenuto Cellini
(©Bettmann/Corbis)

The first thing to go on the table was the salt cellar, which was placed before the most important person, salt being of immense value in the Middle Ages. The status of those who were to eat could be determined by where they sat in relation to the salt. High-status diners ate above the salt, others below. Only those above the salt were seated on chairs. The rest sat on benches that were, in effect, miniature versions of the trestle tables at which they ate.

The most important implement on the table was a carving knife. Carving was a manly art, and at first it was reserved for the carver, a person of exalted rank. Later this task was given over to the "officer of the mouth," the highest-ranking servant. A

The carver (Courtesy of the New York Public Library Picture Collection)

concern with courtliness and manners, if not sanitation, demanded that the officer of the mouth "set never on fish, beast, or fowl more than two fingers and a thumb." Diners brought along their own knives. They used them to cut foods into pieces small enough to be eaten conveniently with the hands or conveyed directly into the mouths on the point of the knife.

The tables used in French banquets were covered with a large cloth called the *nappe*. The top was kept clean, but the sides where it hung down were used for wiping the hands (made especially greasy by the absence of forks). Occasionally *manuturgia*, or hand towels, were made available.

The French word *nappe* is the source of the English word *napery*, meaning "table linens." *Napkin* is a diminutive form, and *apron* is an altered form of *napron*. Likewise, the culinary term *napper* is used to describe coating or covering food with sauce.

Food was served from common bowls, called messes. It was scooped, or dragged, to large dishes or to trenchers, either *tranchoirs* (slabs of stale bread used as plates) or *tailloirs* (large wooden or metal plates), which were shared by two or three diners.

In France, as in England, wealthy households had a large number and variety of silver bowls, basins, pitchers, and other serving vessels. Ordinary folk, on the other hand, might have no more than a pewter mug. The display of wealth through service ware was only one of the ways that the host's status was expressed at the table.

In the late fourteenth century people began to think of food and its service as worthy of study and respect. In France, Taillevent (Guillaume Tirel, 1312–1395), cook to Charles V and Charles VI, collected and codified medieval cooking in his book *Le Viandier*. *Le Ménagier de Paris*, modeled on *Le Viandier* and written by an elderly gentleman for his young bride, outlined the bourgeois repertoire.

In the mid-fifteenth century Platina of Cremona (Bartolomeo Sacchi), librarian to Pope Sixtus IV and a learned epicure, published *De Honesta voluptate et valutudine* (On Honest Indulgence and Good Health). In it, Platina discussed proper manners, table etiquette, table settings, nutrition, and more. It also contained recipes. *De Honesta*

Caterina de Medici (1519-89), an Italian princess from the famous Florentine family, married the Duc d'Orleans, later Henri II of France. She introduced a more refined style of dining, including the use of the fork and the napkin. Her Florentine chefs influenced French chefs as well, most particularly in the use of spinach. (Courtesy of Culver Pictures)

voluptate altered the way the wealthy, who still ate with their hands, thought about eating and manners. Written in Latin, it was translated into many languages, including Italian, French, and English, and had tremendous impact.

Although not all historians agree, some trace the origins of classic fine dining to a single aristocratic family of the sixteenth century, the Medicis of Florence. When Catherine de Medici (1519–1589) married the future King Henri II of France in 1533, she brought as part of her entourage a small army of Italian cooks, chefs, servants, and wine experts.

Catherine introduced fine dining and its appropriate service to France; her cousin, Marie de Medici (1573–1642), wife of King Henri IV, continued that culinary mission. François La Varenne, one of the greatest chefs of France, received his training in the kitchen of Henri IV. While Taillevent looked to the past for inspiration, La Varenne's book *Le Cuisinier françois* (1651) showed signs of a more modern approach to cooking, foreshadowing *Le Guide culinaire* of Escoffier, still 250 years in the future.

The new table manners that began with Platina were expanded during the reigns of the Medici cousins. Among the table refinements brought to France by the Medicis (and which later spread to the rest of Europe) were:

- Washing hands before sitting down at the table—an old custom that had fallen into disuse
- Using a fork to select food from a platter
- Passing the best morsels of food to others at the table
- Not blowing on hot food

THE FORK AND OTHER EATING UTENSILS

The fork was used in Italy long before it appeared in France or England. The fourteenth-century monarch Charles V did not use forks, nor did the Duc de Bourgogne list forks in his household inventory of 1420. Bartolomeo Scappi's 1570 book *Cuoco secreto di Papa Pio Quinto* (Cooking Secrets of Pope Pius V) contains the first known illustration of a fork.

The title page of the 1604 edition of Vincenzo Cervio's *Il Trinciante* (The Server), printed in Venice, shows a wood engraving of meats being roasted on spits and carved tableside. Of the two diners pictured, one seems to be examining a morsel skewered on the point of a knife, while the other sits patiently, his two-pronged fork awaiting the next slice of roasted bird. The illustration is an early-seventeenth-century glimpse of table manners in the midst of change.

In early-sixteenth-century England Henry VIII initiated formal, luxurious dining, and under the rule of his daughter Elizabeth I in the latter half of the century the practice flourished. Men and women were seated alternately at the table. Husbands and wives shared a plate, but it was a true plate, not a trencher of stale bread. (Trenchers survive today only in our term *trencherman*, meaning "an enthusiastically big eater.")

Table manners came to be expected of refined people. Books about table manners and the right way to serve became popular. Forks were recommended for serving portions of meat (which by that time were beginning to be carved by women at the table), although the use of forks as eating implements was still not

mentioned. The spoon was the primary table utensil. Diners brought their own spoons to dinner. Silver was reserved for the wealthy, which in those times tended to mean nobility. Other spoons were made of tin-plated iron or, for the very poor, wood. Lord Braithwaite's Rules for the Governance of the House of an Earl (1617) listed spoons and knives as essential but did not mention forks.

Thomas Coryate (ca. 1577–1617) was a traveler and onetime jester in the court of James I. He had traveled to Italy, where he became convinced of the usefulness of the fork.

Coryate's English countrymen remained unconvinced, and for his efforts to win acceptance of the new device, they mocked him with the nickname Furcifer, a specially coined word combining the Latin word for fork with one of the devil's names. Indeed, as late as 1897 sailors in the British navy were not permitted to use forks, which were considered an affectation.

CORYATE WROTE HOME FROM ITALY IN 1611:
"[The Italians] always at their meales use forke when they cut their meat for while with their knife which they hold in one hand they cut the meate out of the dish, they fasten their forke, which they hold in their other hand, upon the same dish; so that whatsoever he be that sitting in the company of any others at meale, should unadvisedly touch the dish of meate with his fingers which all at the table doe cut, he will give occasion of offense unto his company, as having transgressed the lawes of good manners, insomuch that for his error he shall at least be brow beaten, if not reprehended in wordes."

In Asia chopsticks had been in use long before forks. As Margaret Visser reports in *The Rituals of Dinner*, "Once people become accustomed to fingers remaining clean throughout the meal, napkins used for serious cleansing seem not only redundant but downright nasty. Father João Rodrigues observed in the seventeenth century that the Japanese were 'much amazed at our eating with the hands and wiping them on napkins, which then remain covered with food stains, and this causes them both nausea and disgust.'"

During the reign of Queen Anne in the early eighteenth century, napkins and the increased use of forks made it possible to use finer napery. Table setting began to be seen as an art in itself. Books on the subject, including the first titles about napkin folding, began to appear.

Meanwhile, the dining room had begun to be a place of pomp. A brigade system of officers of the household, complete with uniforms (which even included swords for the highest-ranking servants), was created, not to serve in the trenches but to wait on the trenchermen. The first service manual of this brigade, *L'Escole parfaite des officiers de bouche* (The Perfect School of the Officers of the Mouth) (1662), explained, "Give the best portions to the most esteemed guests, and if they are of great importance, give them an extra portion."

Service à la française (French service) had its origins in the court of Louis XIV, a grandson of Marie de Medici and Henri IV, who reigned during the latter half of the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth century. The meal was divided

into three separate parts, or services. The first and second services consisted of soups, game, and roasts; the third service was dessert. The sequence was much the same as it had been in ancient Greece and Rome. As guests entered the dining room they found the first course, the entrée, already in place. Hot food was kept warm on réchauds, or heating units. After the dishes in the first service were finished, the guests left the table while it was cleaned and reset for the second service.

Service à la française had some distinct disadvantages. The tables were overloaded, and not merely with food. Réchauds, centerpieces, flower baskets, and candelabras filled every available inch. Despite the use of réchauds, the food was often cold, or at best had lost its freshness. With so many dishes served, most guests limited themselves to one or two and rarely had an opportunity to sample the rest.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

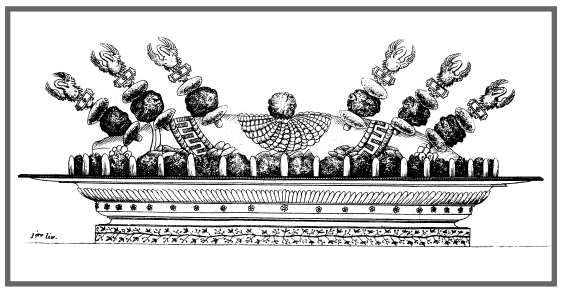
Up to the end of the eighteenth century, lavish meals and presentations were confined almost exclusively to the aristocracy. This was especially true in France. With the start of the French Revolution in 1789, the political and social landscape of not only France but England and the rest of Europe changed. With these vast changes came a democratization of dining. No longer were chefs cooking only in the homes of the rich and powerful. With the toppling of the French monarchy and nobility, their chefs had no choice but to ply their trade in other venues. The development of restaurants in France was not due solely to the French Revolution, but this event spurred the growing need for eateries available to the increasing numbers of the middle class.

Coffeehouses had been around, both in France and in England, since the second half of the seventeenth century; they began as places for businessmen to meet. Lloyd's of London, the insurance firm, was originally Lloyd's coffeehouse (founded 1687), a place where ship's captains, shipowners, merchants, and insurance brokers met to discuss the day's events, art, literature, and politics—and gamble on the chances of ships reaching their destinations safely. The Café Procope in Paris was a popular gathering place for intellectuals. It opened at its current location, across the street from the Comédie-Française theater, in 1686 and is the oldest surviving coffeehouse in Paris.

The first real restaurants in France appeared about twenty years before the French Revolution; they proliferated after that as the nobility's former chefs sought employment. In 1782 A. B. Beauvilliers opened the restaurant La Grande Taverne de Londres. The term *restaurant* already existed in France, but it previously referred only to small establishments that sold broth or bouillon, that is, restoratives. Beauvilliers had spent time working in England, especially during the Revolution,

when association with French nobility might have endangered his life. Beauvilliers contributed the à la carte (literally, "from the card") menu, offering his guests the opportunity to choose from a number of menu items, as opposed to the fixed-menu table d'hôte of the past.

Antonin Carême (1784–1833) lived during the crest of the social changes brought about by the Revolution. He represented the grandest statement of the old, court-based cuisine, inspired by the vigor of a new society in transition. Carême was one of the last practitioners of service à la française. It was a perfect frame for the exhibition of his art.



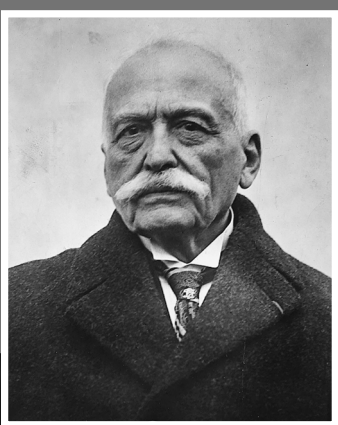
Antonin Carême (1784–1833) became known as the founder of the *grande cuisine* and was responsible for systematizing culinary techniques. He had a profound influence on the later writing of Escoffier, and was known as the "chef of kings, king of chefs." Pictured above is one of Carême's stylized presentations, for which he was noted. (Courtesy of the Art Archive)

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Carême's preference for the grandeur of service à la française could not slow the shift to a more guest-centered form of service. In 1808 Grimod de la Reynière published his *Manuel des amphitryons*, a guidebook for table service. He used an archaic term

GEORGES AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER

Georges Auguste Escoffier (1847-1935) was a renowned chef and teacher and the author of *Le Guide Culinaire,* a major work codifying classic cuisine that is still widely used. His other significant contributions include simplifying the classic menu in accordance with the principles advocated by Carême, and initiating the brigade system. (See "The Kitchen Brigade System" later in this chapter.) Escoffier's influence on the foodservice industry cannot be overemphasized. (Courtesy of Culver Pictures)

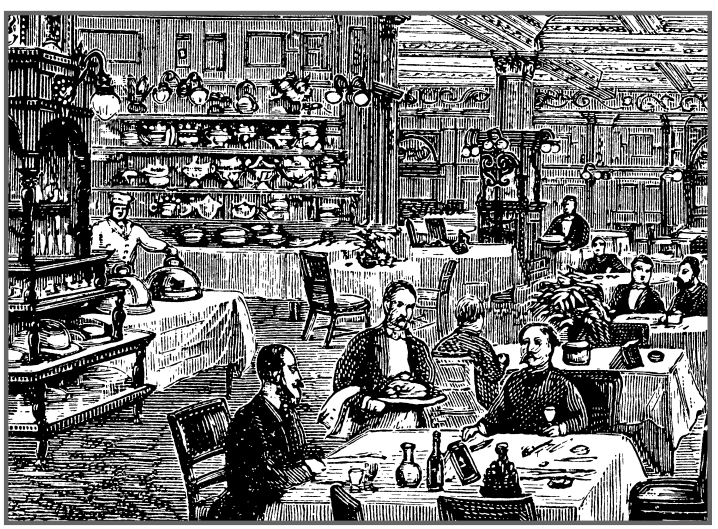


for host (after Amphitryon, who was the husband of Alceme, the mother of Hercules in Greek mythology) for the person in charge of the dining room, in place of the old expressions "officer of the mouth" and "carver." The motto for service staff, according to Reynière, was "The host whose guest is obliged to ask for anything is a dishonored man."

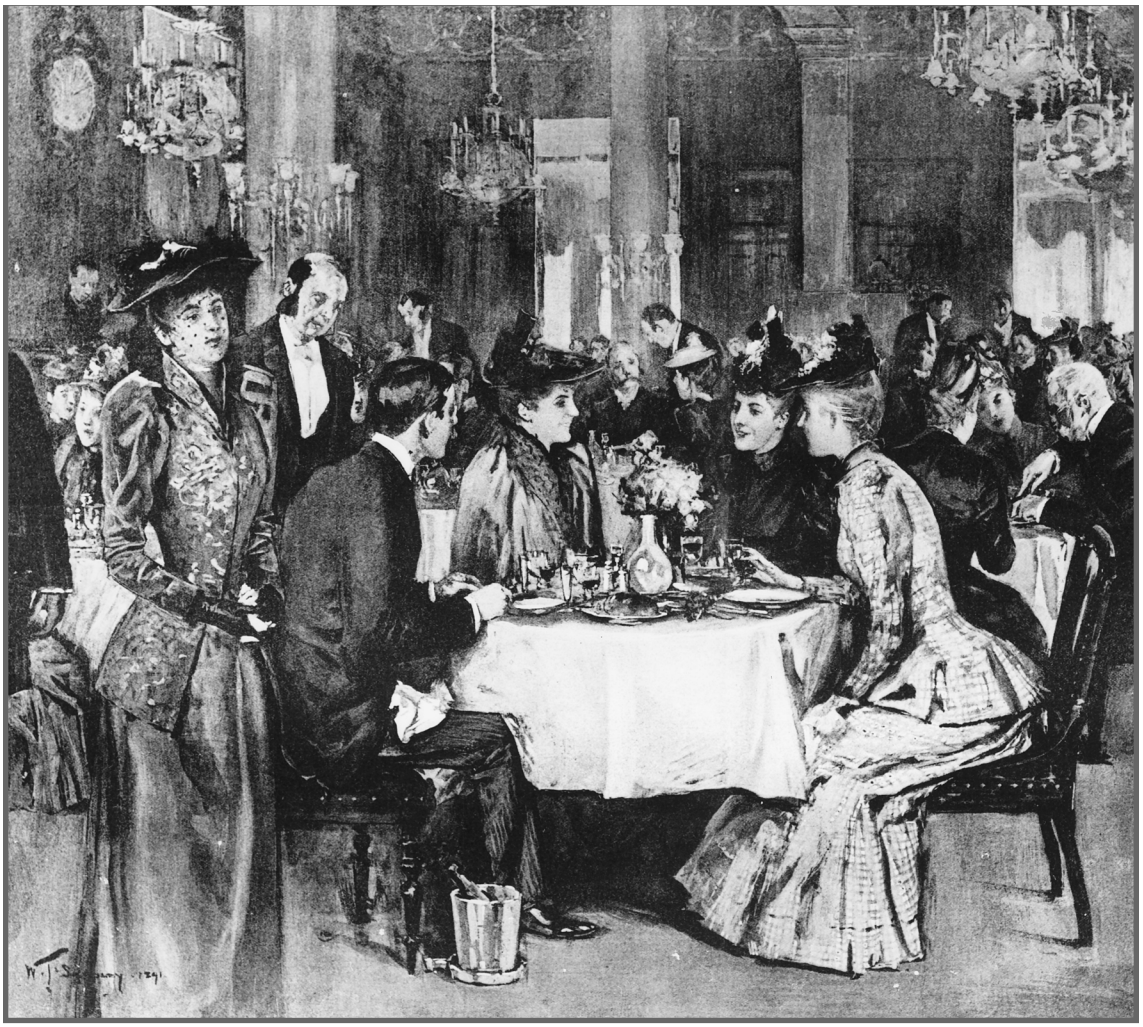
This change in focus from host to guest was echoed in 1825 in the *Physiologie du goût* (The Physiology of Taste) by Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755–1826). Félix Urbain-Dubois's *La Cuisine classique* (1856) took this approach to service another step forward. It introduced service à la russe (Russian service) to European dining rooms. Food was served hot from the kitchen rather than from an immense display where all the dishes, prepared well ahead of time, had been sitting for maximum visual effect.

If service à la française expected diners to be impressed by the host's largesse (even if the food was served lukewarm), service à la russe ensured that each guest's meal was served at its peak. The burden of guaranteeing the guest's enjoyment was shifted to the host (or the host's staff). In a sense, Urbain-Dubois had rediscovered the best aspect of classic Greek, Roman, and medieval table service: piping hot dishes rushed out of the kitchen for the guest's delectation.

From this point on, the development of European, and especially French, cuisine became a series of small refinements. The formats of table d'hôte, service à la française, and service à la russe were continuously fine-tuned.



Cesar Ritz (left) teamed with Auguste Escoffier to make the Savoy in London (above) the epitome of fine dining in the late 1800s. (©Bettmann/Corbis)



Delmonico's in lower Manhattan led New York's fine-dining scene in the latter part of the nineteenth century. (©Corbis)

THE NEW WORLD

Just as the landscape of Europe was transformed by the Industrial Revolution, the United States changed drastically in the late 1800s. The factories springing up brought immigrants and workers from the farms and created greater concentrations of people in urban areas. These working groups had to be fed, and restaurants and services were created to meet the needs of these people.

Factories ran on schedules in which mealtimes were strictly defined, so quickly prepared and served meals were necessary. The birth and rise of counter service, where one wait staff member could serve dozens of individual diners, followed that need. The opening in New York in 1902 of Horn and Hardart's coin-operated food vending service, where prepared food items were behind glass doors whose latches were released when the right number of tokens or coins was put in the slot, was a logical step in the development of fast food.

The Industrial Revolution also brought the advent of steam-powered machinery. Steam ushered in a new era of transportation, and with the pounding of the Golden Spike in 1869 the North American continent was spanned by rail. Goods and people could move relatively quickly and easily from the Atlantic to the Pacific. To meet the restaurant needs of this emerging group of train travelers, the Santa Fe Railroad added a string of restaurants owned and operated by Fred Harvey. These Harvey House restaurants hired all-female wait staff. Harvey made the move so that the gentility of the female wait staff would influence the sometimes rowdy behavior of the male patrons.

Harvey House
(Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas)

Although Americans were a people on the move, they were also a people with a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds. From the middle of the 1800s through the twentieth century, each wave of immigrants gave the culture new foods, new flavors, and new ways of preparing foods. This melting pot is evident in every city on the continent, where a Chinese restaurant may be next to a classic French bistro, which may be next to an Italian trattoria.

With the wide variety of cuisines came a varied selection of eateries. Today high-end dining establishments, or white-tablecloth restaurants, are succeeding alongside bistros, family dining restaurants, and fast-food chains, and the National Restaurant Association predicts continued growth in the industry as more and more people eat out. Each of these styles of restaurant has a defined mode of service, but in all cases the principles of Remarkable Service can be applied.