



# Casual Dining Server Intermediate Training Manual



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## **Style of Service**

### Casual Dining

The Clubhouse dining room and bar offer a casual style of dining.

Casual dining is defined by its:

- Menu and pricing - moderately priced *Gourmet Hamburgers, Salads, Gourmet Pizzas, Grilled Items* in the *Regional American Tradition*.
- Casual dress code for members - casual sports attire, but no blue jeans. Hats or caps are not to be worn in the dining room, but are allowed in the Bar.
- Family-friendly atmosphere - quality children's menu, great dessert selection, comfortable, friendly atmosphere.
- Informal style of service - Enthusiastic and friendly; correct, but comfortable service.

## Host Station

### Appearance

The host stand or station is often the first thing members see when they enter the dining room.

Since first impressions are important, it is essential that the station is clean, well-maintained, and free of clutter.

Stand surfaces should be clean, wood surfaces polished, all supplies and equipment should be out of sight and out of the way, and there should be no hand-lettered signs or pricing cheat sheets taped to the stand or wall.

The stand or station must be neat and well organized.

### Supplies

The host station requires certain items of supply and equipment to operate efficiently.

Supplies include duplicate pads, pencils, pens, scotch tape, credit card charge slips, paper clips, staples, phone book, reservation book, seating chart, grease pencil, comment cards, member list, stapler, extra point-of-sale tape and ribbon, etc.

All supplies should be neatly organized and stored.

### Menus

Menus must be neat, clean, free of spills or stains, without dog-eared edges, and include any inserts for features. A dirty menu should never be presented to members or guests. It is the host's responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient menus and they have been examined for serviceability and cleanliness.

### Host Station, Continued

#### Providing Information

Because of the highly visible role of the host, he or she will be asked any number of questions about the Club and its operations. To answer these questions, the host must be familiar with Club activities and current and local events.

As a result, every host stand or station should have a three ringed binder with information about the Club. Such information includes Club services and venues, hours of operation, policies and procedures, catering information, business cards of key management staff, scripted answers to frequently asked questions, and information about upcoming events, such as holiday meals, special events, and entertainment.

While it is management's responsibility to provide the host with this basic information, he or she must also take responsibility to ensure that the information is up-to-date and accurate.

#### Providing Feedback to Management

Again, because of their highly visible role with frequent and close contact with members, the host should be particularly alert to unhappy members and feedback.

- If a member is grumbling about their meal or service, ask for specifics and write down the information. As appropriate and in keeping with policy or management direction, offer to "comp" the meal.
- Ensure that all comments, both positive and negative, are relayed to management, so steps can be taken to continually improve the operation.
- Provide comment cards to members as requested or needed.

## Dining Room Organization

### Dining Room Seating Chart

A seating chart will be developed for each Club dining room.

This chart is simply a diagram of the dining space showing each table in relation to the main entrance, kitchen doors, windows, etc. Each table will be assigned a table number to allow servers to record table numbers on all orders.

The seating chart will be covered with acetate so that it can be marked on with a grease pencil. This allows the host to assign tables for reservations, establish server stations for the meal period, and note occupied tables when members have been seated.

### Reservations

The host should review the reservation book as soon as he or she arrives for duty.

All reservations should be blocked out on the seating chart, indicating the name of the party, the time of the reservation, and the number in the party. Any special requests should also be noted and the wait staff informed.

Tables should be set for larger parties as per the reservation or any special requests.

Alerting Wait Staff. If the server responsible for a reserved table is not on the floor when the table is seated, the host must seek them out to inform them that their reservation has arrived.

### Greeting Reservations by Name

The host should keep track of the time and be on the lookout for parties with reservations. When the party arrives, they should be greeted by name, when possible.

### Dining Room Organization, Continued

Servers should be informed of the names of any reservations, so that the server may also greet them by name.

Greeting a party by name gives them the assurance that we are ready for them and that all their needs will be taken care of.

### Confirming that Special Requests Were Met

When leading the party to their table, the host should confirm that special requests have been met. For instance, "Doctor Jones, the table by the window you requested is right this way."

Often the reserving party has asked for a special service as a surprise to someone in the party, such as a birthday cake. Be careful not to give the surprise away.

### Handling Last-Minute Changes Graciously

Frequently reservation parties turn out larger or smaller than requested. It is extremely important that the service staff does not convey impatience or irritation when this happens.

If the party is larger than expected, graciously offer to set additional places, move to a larger table, or add another table to make the original one larger.

If the party is smaller than expected, graciously remove additional place settings or move the party to a smaller table.

The professional and courteous manner in which the service staff handles this common occurrence is a defining element of hospitality.

## Greeting and Seating

### Greeting

The host is responsible for greeting all members when they arrive at the door. The greeting should be spontaneous, sincere, and welcoming. Eye contact is important, and even if busy, the host must focus on that member as if he or she were the only person in the Club at that moment.

After greeting the member, the host should determine:

- whether the member has a reservation (only if reservations have been accepted or are in the reservation book for that meal period, otherwise the question is superfluous), and
- the number in the party.

Take the appropriate number of menus for the number in the party, and say, "This way, please."

### Leading to the Table

If there are any special dining arrangements, such as a buffet or salad bar, the host should mention these and, if convenient, lead the members past them.

The host must be careful to monitor the pace of the members and not leave them behind while leading them to a table.

If the members should stop to talk to other diners, the host should pause, remaining at a discreet distance during the conversation, and then lead the members to their table.

### Greeting and Seating, Continued

Often, while being led to their table, members will ask to be seated at another table. Accommodate their wishes unless the table is reserved for another party.

#### Seating

After indicating the table, assist in seating members by pulling away chairs, by slightly moving tables in tight corners so that members may easily sit down, and by holding chairs for ladies, the elderly or children.

Suggest a highchair or booster seat for infants and small children.

After all members are seated, hand out menus to women first, oldest to youngest, then men, oldest to youngest; mention any features for the day; or special instructions for buffets, if appropriate. Present menus from the right side, holding the menu by the top.

Mention the name of the server who will wait on the table. For example, "This is Susan, your server" or "Your server, Susan, will be right with you."

Notifying Servers. The host should always notify a server who is not present that a new table has been seated in his or her section.

#### Assisting Servers

In some cases when servers are busy, the host may pour water or offer the table a beverage. This keeps the table from having to wait for service.

When not actively engaged in greeting or seating, the host should keep a close eye on the dining room to see if members need anything. It is easy to spot tables needing assistance, as the member will be looking around for their server.

### Greeting and Seating, Continued

Refilling water glasses and coffee cups is a great way to assist servers and to ensure that all is well at each table.

The host may also help servers by presenting members with their checks. While this is normally the servers' job, often they are busy and need the help. Ultimately, it is in the interest of member service that the host should provide this additional assistance.

### Providing Member Relations

Whenever the host has spare moments and servers are staying abreast of their duties, the host should circulate through the dining room talking to members.

The perfect entree for a conversation is to ask the members at a particular table if their meal is satisfactory. Obviously, one must judge which tables to ask this question of. If they haven't been served yet, it would be inappropriate.

Some tables are obviously involved in deep discussion and do not want to be disturbed. The host should take the visual cues and not attempt to enter into conversation with these members.

If the host recognizes a member, he or she should stop and speak to the member, perhaps thanking him or her for their patronage, or mentioning an upcoming special event.

Other opportunities abound at each table that allow the host to casually approach the table and, if appropriate, engage them in conversation, such as to pour another glass of wine from an opened bottle on the table, to clear away dishes, etc.

All such personal contact, when done unobtrusively, graciously, and sincerely, helps foster good member relations.

## **Server Assignments**

### Staff Schedule

The Dining Room Manager should check the schedule to see how many servers are scheduled for the meal period.

Depending upon the number of reservations or the number of meals forecasted for the meal period, the Host or Dining Room Manager will assign stations for each server.

### Station Assignment Considerations

The dining room should be sectioned to give each server from 4 to 6 tables, depending upon size of tables.

Avoid designating any section with too many of one type of table, i.e. deuces, four tops, tables of six or eight. This allows an even distribution of members and better service.

The section(s) most distant from the kitchen should be the smallest as it takes longer to travel from kitchen to tables.

If there are any private parties, one or more servers may be assigned to them.

### Seating Considerations

The host should avoid seating too many tables one after another in any particular section, as this may overload the server in that station.

It is better to spread the arriving members around to the different stations to allow each server to provide excellent service to all tables. Obviously, this is not always possible in that some arriving members may request a specific table in a specific station.

### Server Assignments, Continued

Overall, though, the host should try to spread out the arriving members, both to allow better service and to give tables more privacy, particularly if the dining room is slow.

#### Sending Servers Home

If business turns out to be slow during the meal period, the Dining Room Manager may send home one or more servers.

If this happens, make sure that the remaining servers are aware of additional tables they must pick up.

#### Checking Tables and Sections

Prior to the opening of the dining room, the Dining Room Manager will check all dining room stations and tables. This is done to ensure proper place settings, clean table surface or tablecloths (if used), clean flatware and glassware, that salt and pepper shakers are clean and full, and that sugar caddies are stocked with both sugar and sweetener.

The Manager will also check chairs for crumbs and spills and check the floor under tables and chairs for dropped food, flatware, broken glass or china, napkins, or any other items.

While these items are the responsibility of servers, the fresh eye of the Manager may spot some things missed by servers. The host may assist in these essential checks.

#### Pre-Shift Meeting

Prior to the opening of the dining room, the Dining Room Manager will take a few moments to call the servers together and review the menu and expected business for the meal period. All side work must be completed prior to the pre-shift meeting.

**Server Assignments, Continued**

The pre-shift meeting will cover basic menu items, features and ingredients, cooking times and pricing of features, reservations and special requests, forecasted meals, special instructions from the kitchen, and any other information to keep the staff informed and knowledgeable.

Even when there are no changes to the menu, there may be some items that are out-of-stock, or other pertinent information that needs to be shared with servers.

The Dining Room Manager will also use the opportunity of the pre-shift meeting to check server uniforms and grooming.

**Review I**

List two of the four features that define casual dining style of service.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it important for the host station to be neat, clean, and organized?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List three types of information the host should have available.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

List two purposes of a dining room seating chart.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Hosts should alert servers when a party is seated. (circle one)	True	False
Members do not expected to be recognized or greeted by name.	True	False
Not getting upset by changes is an important attribute for a server.	True	False
If a host is unavailable, servers should greet & seat arriving parties.	True	False
The first server to arrive on a shift gets to pick his/her own station.	True	False
Spreading members out in the dining room allows better service.	True	False
The DR Manager will double check stations and table settings .	True	False

List three things he or she will be looking for.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

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