

## The Ten Pet Peeve Customers of Restaurateurs

OK, we may be smiling chefs, well-mannered waiters, magnificent managers and suave sommeliers, but under our professional guise we're human beings. Things get under our skin, too. Particularly these ten habits of highly annoying customers, culled from an industry-wide survey. See how these stack up to your own experience, when difficult customers make you want to dash the dishes to the floor and walk out and forget it all... Non-tippers. - Let's get the predictable one out of the way first. Actually, it's that people still tend to be awkward about tipping; not quite sure what to do. They generally follow instinct and tip pretty much automatically, albeit at 10 %, but plenty don't tip at all. These are of course mainly large tables that demand much of the attention and usually seem to get the bill to the exact dollar. Menu re-writers. - A very popular pastime. The customer wants the chicken dish, but with the bits that go with the fish. Oh wait, can you put some shredded turnip on top of it as well. We of course have no problem if the customer can't eat a certain ingredient; allergies happen. Accommodating is one thing, but we hate when they get wackily creative on us. We have put more than just a little bit of thought into what ingredient matches another. No shows. - Ask any restaurant owner or manager the best thing a customer can do to louse up a good night, and this is it. It is pretty easy to do this from home. Just ring up a popular restaurant, book a table of eight for Friday night and don't turn up. Meanwhile, we turn away other tables when we're fully booked and order extra food in, expecting those eight diners to show up. Customers who change their mind on a dish once it is in front of them. - It usually happens with a larger group, so there's the maximum fuss involved. What the sly little customer does is eye the dish next to them and think, "Yummy, that looks much better than what I got, I wonder if..." The waiter is summoned, usually carrying four plates for the same table as he is casually informed that the wrong dish was brought. The poor waiter has to come back and tell the chef to cook another dish, and the result is a chef yelling and jumping around a bit as he tries to plate up another twenty meals. It would be nice if the customer could just say, "I changed my mind." Obnoxious customers. - While this one does not affect the kitchen staff directly, it's still a hassle. Every now and then a customer will come in after having a really bad day and decide to blow off some steam by letting the waiter have it, since they are the closest target. This leaves the waiter in a glum mood - and nothing moves through a restaurant team quicker than a bad mood. Ever noticed that? The hostess drops a tray on her foot and two minutes later the dishwasher is crabby, and he's all the way in the back! Diners in a rush. - That in itself is not a problem, if they let us know as they order. Things start to fall apart when customers orders an entree, followed by a well-done steak and then half an hour later declare that they have to be out of there in ten minutes flat. Have you ever had a customer actually snap his fingers at you? The people who order a medium steak and send it back because it's pink in the middle. - Why do we get one of those every time? Lots of people are squeamish about blood in a steak - that's fine, but that's why we have this marvelous term "well done", which means "it's not pink in the middle". Maybe we need to replace the three words with a one-to-ten scale of done-ness - and a robot programmed to get the steak cooked with microsecond accuracy. Or stop serving steak. The people who go, "What's good tonight, Chef?" - The chef loves talking to customers when they stick their head in the kitchen to say hello. What irks them is when a... say, "boisterous" customer comes into the kitchen and asks for a good recommendation. Well, we have these great fresh scallops just in, and we're going to prepare them with... No, no, no, they hate scallops! And they don't like the next ten items you recommend, either. Well, then, why were they asking? Did they see it on an episode of "Friends"? Confused vegans and vegetarians. - Sure, vegetarianism has leaped in popularity over the last few years. Even if you aren't a vegetarian restaurant, most will be only too happy to accommodate their needs, especially if notified when the table is booked. The problems start when they are not sure what sort of vegetarian they are. This one is OK with fish, that one won't allow eggs or honey, this one wants to make an exception for veal because veal is free-range, that one doesn't want olive oil on his salad because he read something in the New Yorker about exploitation of a kind of wasp that pollinates the trees. All the while, you're standing there trying to keep the "dos" and "don't dos" straight in your head, while wondering when ever did "vegetarian" stop meaning "no meat, everything else is good"? And the last one - I'm bluffing! No, it isn't all bad news, so let's hoist a toast to the 99% of the good customers who make our job a joy. Without them, the lemons wouldn't stand out from the crowd!

## About the Author

Freelance writer for over eleven years. Looking for a discount on your work uniforms and accessories? You might want to check out these sites.

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