

## Lack of good service afflicts food customers

Whatever happened to good service in the American restaurant? Did it die, a victim of apathy among the customers? Did it fall prey to the general rise of operating costs in the restaurant industry? Or, did it ever really exist?

Foreign visitors to the United States have continually berated and bewailed the utter lack of good, efficient service in the American restaurant. They have complained about almost every facet of dining out in America, from the filth on the tablecloths to the chilly condition of the food when the plate finally reaches the table.

Such respected public figures as Charles Dickens have in the past written acerbic comments on the state of American dining, the conclusion of one being that he would not condemn his own mother-in-law to continually eat in American restaurants, saddled with American service. It is a conclusion that I am wholeheartedly in agreement with.

Why must we never be able to expect fine service as a general rule, rather than the exception? I think that part of the problem lies in the American attitude toward service.

The idea that serving another man is demeaning, undignified, and to be avoided like the plague is one founded in the early days of the nation, embellished in the ensuing years by traditions of independence, and cemented by time into place, to forever taint the simple pleasure of eating out.

David Ware  
omelet

The unswept table, the cold plate, the slightly obtrusive elbow of the server, these are all visible manifestations of the server's feeling that he or she is serving beneath her station, hopefully not for long.

Sometimes, this dream comes true, but more often the period of service stretches out, and many more customers are subjected to sub-standard service, resulting in spoiled dinners.

The other part of the problem is one of lack of training. Given the attitude that service is a repugnant occupation, one to be evaded and escaped at the first opportunity, why should one actually go to school to learn what is at best a temporary trade? This attitude prevails, and American dining suffers as a result.

Is there a remedy for this problem, this distasteful condition, railed against yet accepted by American diners? I believe there is, and this shall be the subject of my next column.

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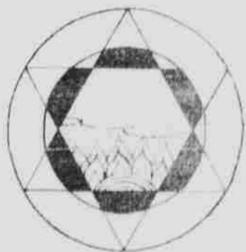
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