

# Cooking institutes teach art of service

David Ware  
omelet

In this space last week, as some may recall, I complained about the appalling lack of fine service to be found in the greater number of American restaurants. Since then, several people have chided me for my obsession with good service and have suggested that Americans cannot give as good service as Europeans because they are not "born into the trade."

This is apologetic balderdash. The service one experiences abroad is made, not born. It is spawned in schools set up for the express purpose of "training a professionally competent and morally impeccable younger generation of hoteliers and restaurateurs."

These words were taken from the catalog of the Bellevoir School of Zurich, Switzerland, a school that specializes in individualized training of students, both male and female, in the theory and practice of serving.

The school is situated in a mansion close to Lake Zurich. A first-class restaurant is attached to it, to serve as a training area for the students.

The students are of all ages and nationalities, since even experienced innkeepers return from the world over for refresher courses.

By the time the students are done with the school, they know how to cook a simple lunch or a banquet, make menus, wait on tables, carve meat before the guests, select, chill, decant and serve vintage wines, mix cocktails, buy food,

calculate per-portion costs, prepare bills, do bookkeeping, look after the silver, linen and furnishings and how to properly handle beer.

Throughout all of this instruction is a constant and firm stress on being polite, clean, hard-working cooperative and, above all, pleasant.

Each student is expected to keep a well-ordered notebook. This is considered part of the curriculum because the student keeps it for life, referring to it constantly in his profession.

The students wear uniforms to classes; white coats for the cooks, black coat and pants for the waiters, black dress and apron for the waitresses. They are downgraded if the uniforms are not clean and well-pressed.

These conditions may sound a trifle harsh, but the results are unmistakably present. Bellevoir School, and other schools like it, produce the cream of the world's waiters and restaurant staffs.

Last week I stated that I believed there was a solution to the problem of bad service in our restaurants. This is my solution: the establishment of more schools devoted to the teaching of proper hotel and restaurant management.

A tradition of excellence in service cannot be established without education in the art, and without a tradition to build upon, the service in American restaurants will stay at the present substandard level.

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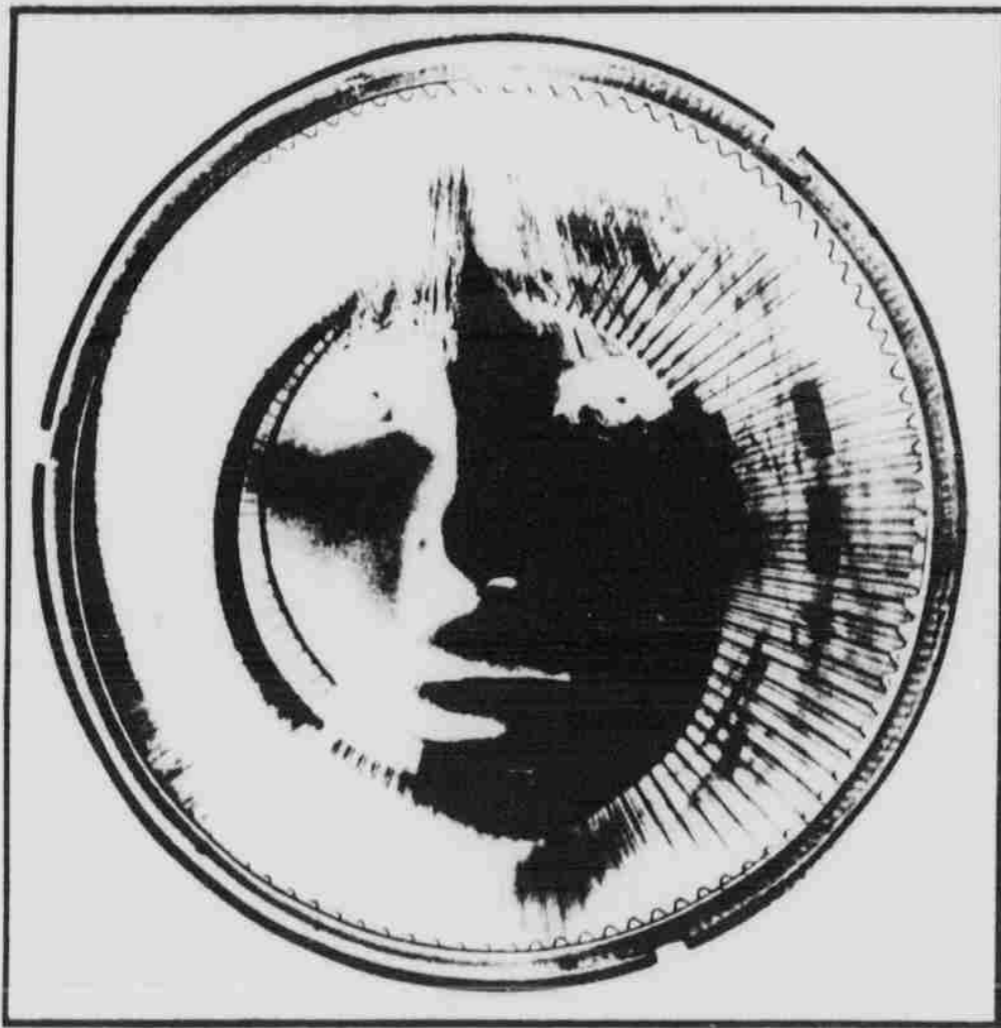
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