

Economizers: Don't Fight 'Em, Join 'Em

The best servers breathe, adjust, and flow to guests' ever-changing styles, moods, and pocketbooks. Having a planned approach to every diner, whether an economizer, faithful regular, complete meal diner, or jackpot table, maximizes your income and their experience.



Maine lobster coupons. We prayed Anne, our manager, wouldn't seat these cheapskates in our stations, convinced they'd order only the lobster meal-deal with water and leave measly 10% tips.

Economize with Them

Fed up after a party of three left me loose change on a \$30 check, I thought, "why fight 'em, why not join 'em?" As Anne seated a coupon-carrying party of four, I decided it was time for a fresh approach: "Welcome to the Georgetown Seafood Grill. We're delighted you're here, and the lobster special is a great value. It's also a great value to share a bottle of Frascati, a light,

crisp white produced near Rome. At \$12, it provides a glass and a half per person," I encouraged. I was taken aback when an ascot-wearing blue blood shot back, "We'll take it!" Figuring I was on a roll, I continued, "For an appetizer, consider our tasty Thai shrimp potsticker. And don't miss our warming clam chowder. We also feature an excellent classic Caesar Salad." Dead silence.

Keep the Faith

Pressing on, I opened the Frascati and preset the table with shell bowls, claw crackers, and seafood forks, and helped the foursome don bibs. I attended to every detail—cleared dirty glassware, replaced a fallen napkin—was ever present but didn't hover. After they finished, I cleared sip sticks, cracker wrappers, and dirty dishes. Then, I placed the dessert tray in the middle of the table: "For the finale, we offer white chocolate banana mousse pie, ginger crème brulee, apple cobbler with vanilla ice cream, and key lime pie. We also offer Sambuca, Frangelico, Gran Marnier, and Baileys as well as espresso and cappuccino." I waited through the silence. No luck on the desserts or cordials, but they ordered four cappuccinos — which in those days totaled \$10. Presenting the check, I offered a fond farewell: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm glad you enjoyed the Frascati. Many thanks for joining us, and, since we're neighbors, I hope to see you again soon."

Reap the Benefits

Had I prejudged and treated those guests like second-class citizens, robotically going through the motions, the check would have been \$40, and I'd have gotten — if lucky — a \$4 tip. But, since I was on my best behavior, I got a \$12 tip on a \$62 check, an increase of 300

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percent. I appealed to their frugality by offering the value-priced Frascati. And, although they didn't go for extras, I graciously gave them an opportunity to enhance their meal. I didn't pout and detach but was warmly attentive from start to finish. And I learned three lessons:

1. Lousy tips are self-fulfilling prophecies for servers who pre-judge.
2. Don't let down at the mere sight of certain types of guests.
3. Don't carry bad feelings from one table to the next.

Empathize

You sometimes economize when you go out, right? Don't you from time to time order only a drink and an appetizer? Don't think that everyone toting a coupon or diner's discount card is a mean-spirited chump on the cheap.

Today, many guests look for ways to save. And, as importantly, diners want a break from the bad news — a cocoon of warmth and kindness. Providing a safe haven is the key to gaining gratitude, loyalty, less stress, and more dollars in your pocket.

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