

Six Ways to Create Magical Connections with the Inside-Scoop Tool Box

So, you want to be a food and beverage expert extraordinaire? The secret to knock-your-socks-off service is to arm yourself with an inside-scoop toolbox of guest preferences, the local area, current events, and cool activities.



3. Know thy guest. When you start with “Hi, how are you,” you’ll get “Fine.” Instead ask, “Where are you from?” If the reply is “San Francisco,” and even if you’ve never been to Fog City, say something like, “I’ve always wanted to check out Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge.” Show genuine interest, and guests will unload a treasure trove of insights: where they live, favorite foods, what they do — priceless intelligence to create a customized experience.

4. Entertain and educate. Years ago, I worked at the Hawk ‘n Dove with the late DC bartender legend “Baseball Bill,” a walking encyclopedia of baseball trivia. His bar was packed three-deep with sports-crazed patrons who would eavesdrop on the lively repartee between Bill and his fans. Check in with CNN, the BBC, and Comedy Central. Being up on sports, the arts, entertainment, and local and international events keeps you from appearing clueless. Stay away from politics, sex, and religion.

5. Stay on top of diet trends.
The gluten-free audience



is 44-million strong. Don’t be caught flat-footed when it comes to knowing the ingredients in every menu item. Vegans, Paleo Caveman dieters, and guests with allergies will appreciate your awareness and guidance.

unique Italian music from New York’s famed Rizzoli bookstore. Guests were charmed by little-known (in the U.S.) artists like Riccardo Cocciante and Lucia Dalla. “Who’s that singing? Where can I get a copy?” guests frequently inquired. I had the artist list handy. (I once had to stop a guest from nicking a sleeve of the prized CDs!)

In the end, keep your toolbox loaded with answers to common questions and artful tactics to uncover guests’ wants and needs that say “I’m here for you.” You’ll be glad you did.

TURNING GUESTS ON TO NEARBY TREASURES IS A PERFECT WAY TO PROVIDE A VALUE-ADD EXPERIENCE.

6. Know thy restaurant. Guests love the skinny on your chef, site history, the architect, and owners. As examples...

Concept—While working for Justice Urban Tavern in downtown LA, GM Paul Travino stressed, “Letting guests know who we are and what we stand for is important.” Their mantra: “We’re your friendly downtown LA gastro pub with food and drink sourced from California wineries, breweries, and farms.”

Music—Back in my waiter days at Paulo’s of Georgetown, concept guru Paul Cohn tasked me with listening to and purchasing

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