



# The Guided Tour: How to Avoid Pitfalls and Master the Good Stuff

**H**ow many times have you heard a well-crafted menu tour from a knowledgeable, caring server? One in twenty outings...maybe? Without a tour, guests can be their own worst enemies. They order “safe” and miss out on the hidden treasures of your menu.

**O: Open with a call to attention and a benefit to listening**

Kick off your tour with, “Ladies and gentlemen. Please allow me a few moments to tell you about four great things.” Like a ring leader in a circus, you alert your audience to settle down and listen. And, by telling guests you’ll be brief and will offer expert advice, they’ll relax, knowing they won’t have to endure a mind-numbing dissertation.

**P: Point guests to an exact location and pause**

Next, direct guests to a section, then to a specific location. “If you look on the upper right-hand side of the menu under appetizers, first item down, you’ll find our calamari.” Then, pause to make certain everyone’s with you. Guests who don’t follow you will side-talk and interrupt. Simply stop, walk over to Mr. Lost, and use your pen to help him find his place. Then resume your tour. Never talk over distractions.



**E: Entice guests with a few well-chosen words.**

Captivate with a brief trigger word presentation. “Our bartender Phil from Philadelphia makes a great Grey Goose martini.” Names, places, and brands inspire guests to listen, spark conversation, and trigger sales.

**N: Navigate the menu until you’ve designed a complete meal**

Any veteran waiter will tell you that guests don’t read menus. When you walk guests through your

starter, soup and salad, and entree categories, you highlight standout items and help guests see how the menu works. For example, servers at J-Paul’s of Georgetown in D.C. direct their guests to the raw bar side-flap of their menu.

Embrace the multitude of tour benefits. Romance the food, show how the menu works, give the inside scoop on signature items, save time, sell more, and establish your credibility. And, when recommending an item from each

category, you subliminally suggest a complete meal. Remember, 60 to 90 percent of the time, guests order what you tell them to order. And, even if you sell one more appetizer, wine, or dessert per shift, you’re adding thousands to the bottom line and pile of cash in your pocket.

**Tips to remember:**

- Be on the lookout for millennials who have outfoxed you by perusing your menu on their iPhones.
- Based on your guests’ appetite for listening, deliver a ‘short and sweet’ or ‘razzle dazzle’ presentation.
- Make certain your voice is loud and clear, expressive, and your spiel well organized.
- Never leave the guest with the menu alone for too long — they’ll then decide without your expert advice.
- Avoid, “Look over the menu, and I’ll be back with your drinks.” When you return, you’re dead in the water with zero chance to sell.
- Impress the leader/buyer. She’ll influence her fellow diners to follow your recommendations.
- Don’t tire. Offer specials after the tour. “And, by the way Chef José has also prepared a special fresh filet of sea bass marinated in fresh lemon, sage, and thyme.”
- Use the guided tour with all menus: cocktail, beer, and specialty drink, dessert, and wine list.

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