

**THE
EMILY
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how-to
**DINE
OUT**



THE EMILY POST: HOW-TO DINE OUT

*Retro Rad Emily Ellyn drops
some knowledge on the new era of
restaurant etiquette*

T

he restaurant experience is changing. Not so long ago, all diners needed to do was show up, eat, pay, and leave. The wait staff orchestrated the full-service experience with little or no participation from the customer.

But a new era of dining has dawned. Diners are demanding more involvement in their gastronomic experiences. From full-service to fast-food, menus and methods of preparation and presentation are finding new flavors and form. Diners are now key players in the direction the foodservice industry is going.

Finding the ideal scenario of how restaurateur and restaurant guest can best interact in an industry with

1. *Mind your manners*

It should be unnecessary to remind diners and service providers to practice good manners and be considerate of one another, but who among us hasn't gasped in disbelief at the boorish behavior on either side of the service aisle? If people would simply treat each other the way they would if they were friends eating at one another's

seemingly endless service variables is a daunting task. But if the players are going to (re)align and create a formula for pleasurable experiences in the future, a mutually satisfying framework must be established for today's eating encounter.

Lets take a look at a three-point plan that illustrates how easy it is to forge a symbiotic relationship between restaurant and guest.

homes, the groundwork would be laid for a pleasurable dining experience. This means the host serves the guest with the utmost consideration, and the guest reciprocates with appreciation. VOILA! An enjoyable culinary event has been created whether you are eating in a family dining room or the fanciest restaurant in town.

As for specific examples, here are two common behaviors that often get overlooked.



Show up on time.

Think about dinner at your friend's house; you call when you're going to be late and you don't stand them up. The same should apply in a restaurant. Also note that when you have a reservation the restaurant is holding a table for you, so if you're going to be more than 15 minutes late you should call to see if and when they'll be able to seat you. Expecting them to keep the space empty is unreasonable as it directly impacts their business. In kind, the restaurant should do everything they can to accommodate guests who have afforded them this courtesy.



Appreciate the host or maître d'.

If food is the heart of the dining experience, the host or maître d' is the brain. Many think of hosts as attractive greeters and seaters, but in actuality they are essential to creating customer satisfaction. They orchestrate the rhythm and flow of the restaurant's gastronomic production and manage the interaction between guests, wait staff and kitchen. These people should be appreciated instead of hassled, and in return keep all guests informed and updated on their table's status.

2. *Servitude is out, partnerships are in*

In today's dining environment servitude has been abolished and replaced by partnerships, with the most satisfying dining experiences having evolved to those that include the most customer participation.

However, during this transition restaurants failed to inform customers exactly when, where and how they are

expected to participate in this process. Not surprisingly, most diners don't have a clue about the production side of the service experience. This relates to the back-of-the-house operation, which most guests

cannot define much less explain. While it's easy for diners to understand the dynamic between themselves and their wait staff, as they can see that there are service activities going on around them that contributed to their experience, they don't see the supporting service that is essential to a well executed meal (preparing the various courses, coordinating orders, plating and delivery, etc).

Diners rarely understand that their actions can enhance or undermine the flow of service on many levels, all of which affect their overall enjoyment as well as that of all the other guests.



And while they aren't going to take a course on how their actions can maximize their restaurant experience, they must somehow be informed of the consequences.

Whether or not, and how venues should convey this information is a big question facing restaurateurs today. As one solution we suggest literally mapping the process

out through blueprinting (see infographic). This clearly establishes the chronological steps of full-service dining service. Areas of service problems can be better identified and customers can be gently educated in the art of participatory dining. This can be conveyed audibly via the staff or literally printed somewhere in the menu or venue.



Developed in the early 1980s by G.L. Shostack, Blueprinting creates “a picture or map that accurately portrays the service system so that the different people involved can understand it objectively regardless of their individual point of view.” This description perfectly encapsulates what is needed in the world of restaurants, as the majority of participants have very little awareness of what is going on around them and how they affect those things.

To aid in this goal we have created our rendition of what modern dining should be. This can be downloaded directly by [clicking here](#).

3. *Acknowledge the intangibles*

Restaurants must provide a uniquely wonderful experience to diners if they are to build a strong customer base. Exemplary service, delicious food, and various incentives are musts in today's highly competitive food service industry. But even when all this is present, customers may still leave without satisfaction, whether it be psychological or physical. In this case the restaurant has not

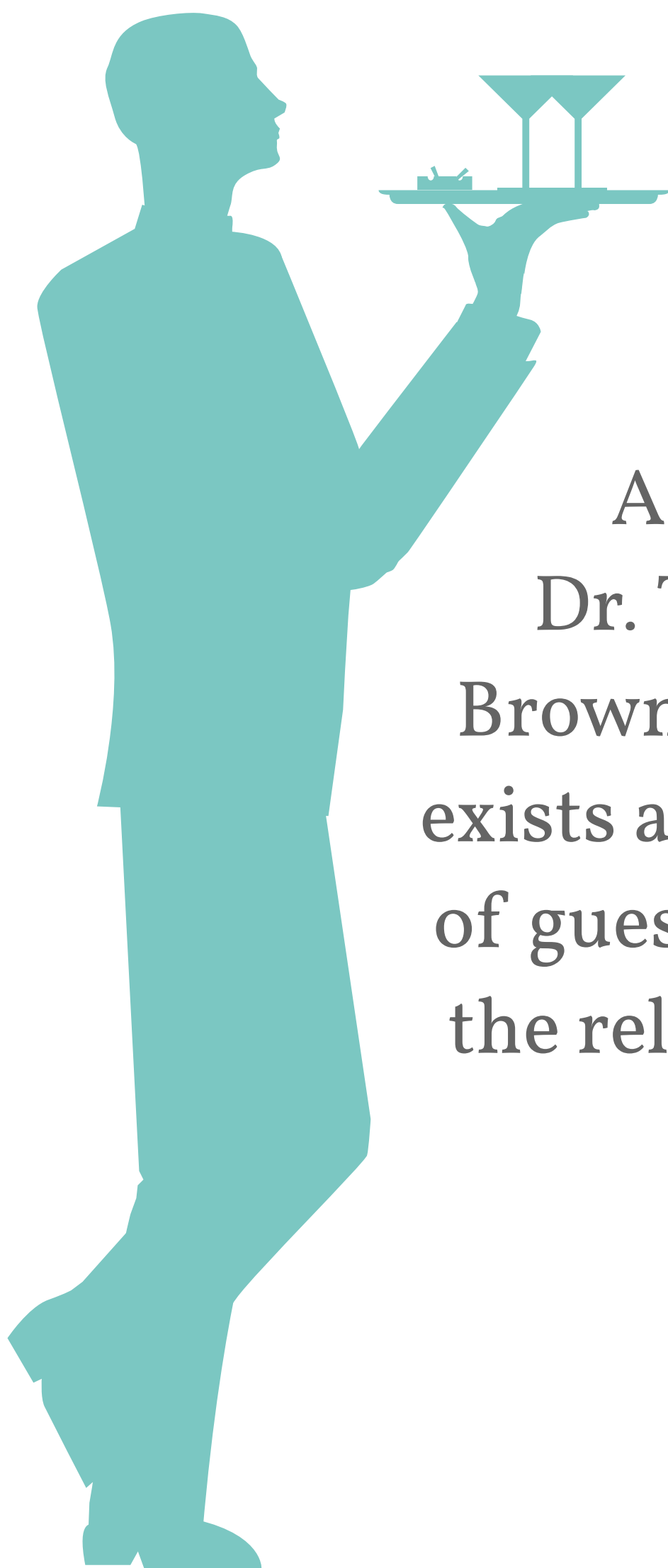
executed the experience successfully.

According to Dr. Taryn Aiello Brown, what really exists at the core of guest service is the relationship

formed between people. That relationship can be as short as a few seconds or as long as a lifetime and is heightened by the quality of the interactions between the people in the transaction.

The empathy shown, emotions conveyed and stories shared are the small things that make for truly amazing service.

Brown also contends that only 1 in 10 people that interact with guests in the hospitality industry really love to serve. These people genuinely desire to ensure their guests have an amazing experience, regardless of physical, mental,





and emotional strain on themselves. So while a service provider may be prompt, reliable and do things “by the book,” if they don’t have that heart for serving then the overall experience will still be lacking. Finding a staff with this core value is what makes positive memories for guests, fosters relationships and forms the loyalty that ultimately translates into repeat business.



And while attainment of this noble goal obviously falls primarily on the restaurants, diners can and should do their part in supporting these forward-moving efforts. They can do this by frequenting their favorite establishments regularly and reciprocating the respect they are shown.

And they can tip!



Tipping is part of the deal

Tipping has an important functional role in this process. Diners can reward excellent service, give thanks for good service and encourage improvements with their tip. But they should always leave a tip as food servers are not required by law to be paid the minimum wage. One study estimates that the average server needs to make 8% in tips in order to earn a living income. So if you happen to have terrible service, I suggest leaving at least 8% and possibly having a critical but encouraging chat with the server. This will send a message without bankrupting them, as bad days happen to everyone. This is one of the guest's most effective means of influencing the process, so speak with your tip, but under no circumstances should you withhold it.

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