



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 5: RESTAURANT AND BARS · LESSON 22

The Service Sequence, With Soul

Technique sets the script.

The guest sets the pace.

In five lines

The technical service sequence — welcome, order, firing, the pass, dessert, check — is in every manual and sets nobody apart: it is the dining room's routine. What people remember about a dinner are the touches nobody required: the sincere recommendation, the detail noticed, the right sentence at the right moment. And one condition of great restaurants that costs nothing: synchronization — a table's plates leave the kitchen together and are served at the same time, because nobody starts eating while looking at their companion's empty plate. This lesson puts soul into the sequence without touching the technique.

The script, step by step

- 1. The welcome, with your reading already done.** The first twenty seconds apply the previous lesson: a calibrated greeting, a comfortable table and a first real attention — the water offered, the chair adjusted, the “today I especially recommend...” only if it's true.
- 2. The order as a conversation.** Taking the order is a formality; advising is a service: knowing every dish (what's in it, how it's made, what substitutions it allows), suggesting according to what the table is looking for and confirming the delicate points — the doneness of the meat, allergies, timing.
- 3. The three magic touches.** Choose three non-required moments per service: the gesture as you serve (“the plate is very hot on this side”), the elegant check after two bites — with your eyes, not by interrupting — and a closing touch that signs off the dinner. Three, not ten: rationed magic is still magic; constant magic is a siege.
- 4. Synchronize or give notice.** A table's plates leave together: this is coordinated with the kitchen when the course is fired, not at the pass. And when something goes wrong — a dish running late — you inform the table before they ask: an announced delay is management; a silent one, abandonment.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Enough dining-room staff	You cut the walking, not the contact: dining-room routes designed to pass by every table, a full tray both going out and coming back, and the three magic touches concentrated in the serving — which is when you're already there.
Extensive menu or full product range	A short menu is backed by deep knowledge: mastering every available dish and describing it truthfully turns the limitation into an offer. “Today I recommend this because it's at its best” is worth more than twenty lines of menu.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Announce the dish as you serve it. Confirm with your eyes. Give notice of timing before they ask.	Serve in silence like someone making deliveries. Clear plates in a hurry while others are still eating. Recite the suggestions like a town crier's memorized proclamation.	Argue with the kitchen or among colleagues in view of the dining room. Keep someone who has already asked for the check waiting: a slow ending erases the whole dinner.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Executing the perfect sequence without a single human contact: technically impeccable, utterly forgettable.
- ◆ Asking "is everything all right?" as a tic every five minutes: checking in is a chosen moment, not a refrain.
- ◆ Starting strong and disappearing at dessert: service is scored as a whole, and the ending counts double.
- ◆ Not passing the information on to colleagues on the shift: the table that mentioned its allergy over the aperitif shouldn't have to repeat it at the main course.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**"What people remember about a dinner
are the touches nobody required."**

This lesson's exercise

Design your three magic touches for a two-course dinner: at exactly what moment they happen, what you say in each one and what you observe. Write them as a script. In the answer that follows, I share mine.