



IN FRONT OF THE GUEST · SEASON 1 · MODULE 5: RESTAURANT AND BARS · LESSON 23

Selling Without Selling and the Buffet That Looks Abundant

*The perception of abundance is management,
not quantity.*

In five lines

Two dining-room skills worth hard cash: the recommendation that raises the check and trust at the same time, and the buffet that looks generous until the last minute. Both share one principle: perception is managed with honesty, never with tricks. The honest recommendation — suggesting what fits, not the most expensive thing — wins the loyalty of the guest who discovers they can trust you; and the well-run buffet — lively replenishment, careful presentation, gaps managed — feeds the sense of abundance regardless of quantity. This lesson trains both.

The script, step by step

- 1. Recommend as you would to a friend.** The litmus test: would you say the same thing to someone in your family? If the answer is yes, sell it with enthusiasm. The short-term sale of an expensive dish that doesn't fit is paid for with distrust on every visit that follows.
- 2. Raise the check by raising the experience.** Good dining-room upselling offers more enjoyment, not more spending: the suggestion of the wine that goes with the dish, the dessert to share, the special coffee. Always with the price mentioned naturally — a surprise on the check destroys in one second what was built over two hours.
- 3. The living buffet.** Abundance is perceived in movement: trays replenished before they empty, display fronts tidy and clean on every round, fruit and bread cared for like shop windows. A half-full but impeccable buffet looks generous; a full but neglected one looks like the end of a party.
- 4. The gap is managed, not disguised.** When a product genuinely runs out: the empty tray is removed (nothing screams scarcity like a gap with leftovers), the display front is rearranged and an alternative is offered to whoever asks — “we’ve run out, but I’ll bring you some X, freshly made.” Honesty with a solution keeps the perception intact.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Variety or a star product	Fewer items, better executed and better described: a short buffet with three excellent things and impeccable presentation beats a long, mediocre one. And live cooking of a single dish — where possible — multiplies the perception of freshness.
Fast replenishment (a swamped kitchen)	Smaller, more frequent trays: the same total product, a constant perception of freshly made. Tray size is a decision about perception, not logistics.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
State the price of what you suggest in the same voice as everything else. Remove what is empty right away. Describe the alternative with genuine enthusiasm.	Systematically push the most expensive item. Answer “we don’t have any” without offering anything in return. Let the guest discover the gap with leftovers.	Lie about a dish to sell it (“it’s freshly made” when it isn’t): one lie detected at the table invalidates all your future recommendations — and those of the entire hotel.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Confusing upselling with pressure: the second push is no longer selling, it’s discomfort with the tip at stake.
- ◆ Recommending without knowing: the generic suggestion (“everything is very good”) is the absence of a recommendation.
- ◆ Neglecting the buffet in the last hour: the guest at 10:25 a.m. paid the same as the one at 8:00 a.m. — and writes the same reviews.
- ◆ Treating the gap as a disgrace: managed with an alternative and the truth, it is a service opportunity; hidden, it is a guaranteed disappointment.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“Recommend as you would to a friend.
Trust is the best average check.”**

This lesson’s exercise

There are 40 minutes of breakfast left and a star product runs out with no way of replenishing it. Write down your complete handling: what you do with the physical gap, what you say to whoever asks and what you note for tomorrow. In the answer that follows, I share my version.