

Kitchen and Restaurant: The Pass Is a Conversation

*The dining room and the kitchen owe each other nothing:
they owe everything to the same guest.*

In five lines

The war between kitchen and dining room is the oldest internal sport in hospitality — and the most expensive: every clash is paid for in timing, in cold plates and in tension the dining room can smell. The pass isn't a border: it's a continuous conversation where the dining room brings information (the table, the timing, the returns) and the kitchen brings truth (what there is, what's running late, what went out). The two house rules: problems are discussed at the pass with facts, not pride; and in front of the guest, zero blame — the plate goes out speaking well of everyone.

The script, step by step

- 1. Firing with complete information.** The order says what; the dining room adds the how: the table in a hurry, the exact doneness, the allergy through both channels, the “fire them together” that synchronization calls for. The kitchen can't get right what nobody told it.
- 2. The truth about timing, in real time.** If a dish is going to be late, the kitchen says so at the pass BEFORE the dining room finds out — and the dining room passes it on to the table before they ask. The chain of notice (lessons 8 and 22) starts at the stove.
- 3. The return without judgment.** A dish that comes back brings information, not an accusation: you listen to what the guest says, decide with judgment (remake, adjust, replace) and execute fast. Who was to blame is analyzed after service, within scheduled working hours — during service, only the solution exists.
- 4. The respect the dining room can smell.** How the kitchen and the dining room talk to each other filters into the whole experience: the tone at the pass, the help at the peak, the thank-you at the end. The best hotels don't have two teams with a door in between: they have one team in two uniforms.

With limited resources: how to hold the standard

If you don't have...	How to hold the standard
Ticket system or digital communication	The pass by voice, with double discipline: orders are called out, confirmed by repetition (“Heard: two sea bass, one without sauce”) and anything delicate also goes in writing. Less technology demands more ritual — and it has worked for a hundred years.
Staff at the service peak	The pass becomes a control tower: a single voice directs what goes out, the dining room picks up on time (a dish dying at the pass is a cold plate with witnesses) and egos wait until closing.

In front of the guest

DO	DON'T	NEVER
Pass the timing on to the table truthfully and calmly. Defend the dish with facts if the guest asks (“it needs its resting time — one minute and it’s ready”).	Carry the tension of the pass into the dining room with your face, a huff or a comment. Promise timing the kitchen hasn’t confirmed.	Blame the other department in front of the guest (“it’s just that the kitchen today...” / “it’s just that the floor didn’t fire it...”): whoever points at a colleague is pointing at their own uniform — you learned it in lesson 3, and here it is played out in every service.

Common mistakes

- ◆ Holding back information because you’re in a hurry: the twenty seconds you save when firing, you pay for ten times over at the pass.
- ◆ Turning the return into a lawsuit: while the kitchen and the dining room debate who was right, the guest waits without dinner.
- ◆ The silent pass: a kitchen that doesn’t call out and a dining room that doesn’t confirm create the mistakes they then blame each other for.
- ◆ Winning the argument and losing the service: at the pass nobody wins — either the table wins, or everyone loses.

THE GOLDEN RULE

**“During service, only the solution exists.
Blame is handed out once the kitchen is cold.”**

This lesson’s exercise

The dining room sends back a dish “because the guest says it’s cold,” and you know it went out just right ninety seconds ago. Write down your complete handling: what you say at the pass, what you do with the dish, and what conversation takes place — and when — about what happened. In the answer that follows, I share my version.