

I'm a waiter and I enjoy my job – and no, I'm not stupid

I've got a confession to make: I'm a waiter and I enjoy it although many assume I must be mentally deficient.

The hospitality business needs some help. Despite some waiters earning £50,000 a year, it is Britain's lowest paid job.

5 Carrying plates for a living is often undervalued and underpaid. Customers throughout the country receive terrible service from angry people employed by the avaricious, exploitative owners.

I have long suspected that the service charge/tipping system may also be partly to blame for the social standing of waitering. With 12.5% tacked on the end of a bill, their role is relegated to the realm of optional extras. In Australia and France, where service is taken incredibly seriously, tipping doesn't really exist. The cost of serving food, like the cooking of it, is included in the price.

10 There are some restaurateurs who truly appreciate the importance of their front of house staff. Michel Roux Jr suggests that service may even be more important than food, when he says that "if you go to a restaurant and the food's great but the service is terrible, you won't go back" but "if the food is mediocre and the service is fantastic, you'll return again and again".

15 Many restaurateurs have worked hard in recent years to usher in a more contemporary, laid-back and yet well-informed approach to service. Will Beckett has deliberately moved his restaurants away from a traditional, more formal, French style of service and has consequently attracted staff who 10 years ago would never have considered waitering.

20 My employers, the Salt Yard Group, have also done this very well. They understand that if staff are allowed to express their personalities, rather than being made to suppress them, the customers will enjoy themselves more. We receive generous pay, proper training and free drink after work. There are good prospects of promotion. The pleasure of working there is returned to the customer and there's an exceptionally high level of staff retention.

25 Maybe, with these initiatives and smarter restaurateurs who know how to motivate their staff, waitering will become a viable career.

By Max Halley, adapted from www.theguardian.com, June 20th, 2013

1. Read the text very quickly and introduce it (type, source, date, title, author, topic).

2. Why does the author admit he might be "mentally deficient" (1.2)?

3. Why is the "tipping system to blame for the social standing of waitering" (1.8-9) ? Compare the United Kingdom to other countries.

4. What is Michel Roux Jr's opinion about service ? Do you agree ?

5. What is, according to you, a "traditional, more formal, French style of service" (I.19) ?

6. What are the advantages of turning to a "more contemporary, laid-back approach to service?" (I.17). Give examples. Which benefit is the most important to you?

7. Do you agree that restaurants should have a more informal approach to service?

8. In your opinion, what qualities must "the perfect waiter/waitress" have ?

9. Find the words in the text corresponding to these definitions:

- a. (adj) *Immoderately desirous of wealth or gain; greedy :*
- b. (noun) *Act of giving a tip, a small sum of money given to someone for performing a service :*
- c. (verb) *To add as an extra item :*
- d. (verb) *To introduce; inaugurate :*
- e. (adj) *Having a relaxed or casual atmosphere or character :*
- f. (noun) *Act of serving at table, as in a restaurant :*
- g. (noun) *The capacity or power to retain; to keep :*
- h. (adj) *Practicable; workable :*

10. Find the English words corresponding to these phonetic spellings :

- a. [mɪ:dɪ'əʊkə]:
- b. [leɪd'bæk]:
- c. [ə'prəʊtʃ]:
- d. ['pleʒə]:
- e. [ɪ'nɪʃətɪvz]:
- f. ['vaiəbl]: