

SUGGESTIVE SELLING OF BEVERAGE

There are certain general rules and helpful reminder which make it easier to sell. The following are some suggestions.

1) Know your menu:

In order to successfully sell items, personnel need to know the product(s). Servers must be prepared to answer questions about item preparation, ingredients used and what accompanies each item. This in particular is important for guests on special diets. Helpful too is knowing what would best complement guest selections, and what items are available for substitutions.

2) Suggest “favorites”:

This technique is successful because it is easier to be enthusiastic about items of personal preference. The enthusiasm will be reflected in facial expressions and the confident manner in which the items are described.

3) Stimulate through vision:

Presenting food and beverage items with eye-appeal is a successful merchandising technique and one that should be utilized whenever possible. Appetizing, well-merchandised items should be made as visible as possible. The use of dessert carts and wine displays are good examples of this.

4) Never play down the quality of an item:

Suggestions should promote the positive aspects of items and convey no negative personal preference. It is important to keep in mind that everyone has different tastes and what one person doesn't like – someone else may love. When guests ask about items which the server may not like, it is best to make impersonal statements. For example, "It's a very popular item," rather than "I don't like it, but..." It is possible to be honest without being negative. Guests will appreciate this approach.

5) Take guest cues:

Knowing when and what to suggest is just as important as the act of suggesting. Although suggestive selling can be helpful, too much can be annoying. The following are some cues servers receive from the guests themselves:

- a) For guests that ask, "What's good today?" or, "What do you recommend?" It's important to reply with definite answers instead of saying, "Everything." In this case, guests are looking for assistance in making a selection.
- b) When guests are taking unusually long to order or are having a hard time making choices, specific suggestions are appreciated. In this case it is important to pinpoint a category of taste preference, such as meat or fish, white or red wine, sweet or sour cocktail, etc. Then, a recommendation of one or two items in that category can be made. If guests still need more time, servers should politely excuse themselves for a few minutes, then return to take the order.

- c) For guests engrossed in conversation, specific and direct suggestions are more appropriate than flowery descriptions. Guests enjoy being entertained in different ways: some with a lot of fanfare; others with quiet but efficient services.
- d) For guests in a hurry, items taking the least preparation time or fast pick-up items should be suggested.
- e) For guests counting calories, less fattening items should be suggested.
- f) Servers should beware of only suggesting higher priced items. Only in case where it is obvious that money is of no concern can this be applied. Careful discretion should be used since many guests may feel pressured and irritated.
- g) For older guests, who may have diet limitations; consider the spiciness and portion sizes (the older guest generally prefers blander preparations and smaller amounts). For younger guests, the opposite is generally true.

6) Seasonal and occasion cues:

It is helpful in suggesting to be aware of special activities, weather conditions, and the time of the day guests are dining. For instance, suggesting something light and cool on a sweltering hot day, such as, “a fresh, crisp salad,” or “a tall glass of iced tea;” and for a cold day, something hot, such as, “a nice bowl of steaming chili,” would be appropriate. When there is a celebration, it is appropriate to suggest champagne, a special cake, etc. to fit the occasion.

7) Paint a mental picture:

The way suggestions are phrased has a lot to do with selling. When describing items, use of descriptive adjectives, i.e., crisp salad, chilled melon, fresh hot coffee; or if known, use of the locality in which it was grown, i.e., Texas grapefruit, orange juice from Florida, is recommended. This helps to stir guest interest. Talking is like painting a picture. Personnel need to make it colorful. It is not enough to suggest “Would you care for an appetizer?” for example. Instead, suggestions should be more specific, actually naming and describing items. Selling of this nature makes the difference between an excitingly different restaurant/lounge and “just another place to eat.” Suggestions should sound too good to resist.

8) When and what to suggest:

- a) Suggest a beverage with every meal – juice with breakfast, iced tea to accompany sandwiches, coffee after dinner, etc.
- b) Suggest breakfast meats with egg and hot cakes/ French toast orders.
- c) Suggest cocktails before lunch and dinner.
- d) Suggest French fried potatoes or other accompaniments with hot sandwiches.
- e) Suggest soup with cold sandwiches.

- f) Suggest appetizers before dinner.
- g) Suggest bottled wines to go with the meal at lunch and dinner.
- h) Suggest desserts after lunch and dinner for every party.
- i) Suggest cordial cocktails after dinner or dessert.
- j) Suggest refills on beverages and cocktails throughout lunch, dinner and lounge service.

Remember: When you suggestively sell, you have a 50 percent chance for success (yes or no). But, if you don't mention anything, you have a 100 percent chance at failure!