

How do you eat? Think about that for a second. We all have our favorite spots and our favorite dishes, but have you ever really put any thought into the whole dining process? Whether you know it or not, eating out comes with a list of unwritten rules and guidelines that once mastered ensure a much more enjoyable experience. So, in no particular order, we present the random rules of the restaurant.



the random rules of dining

By David Grant

RESERVATIONS PREFERRED is not an invitation to just show up. Rather it is code for “call ahead and we won’t stick you next to the kitchen with the new server who is still a couple weeks away from getting it.”

He who holds the wine list is in charge of the table.

Never underestimate the power of the hostess. The table. The server. The wine list. Get the picture?

A Pinot Noir is always a safe bet.

Men – Never order before the woman. I know, I know, she just can’t decide and “you go ahead,” “it all looks so good,” etc. You will wait, patiently, with a smile on your face. Period.

Once you get to know the chef, you should never ask for a menu again.

To impress friends with your wine expertise always incorporate the following words into your description of every wine: forward, mid-palate, notes, finish.

For example – “Very fruit forward with strong notes of cherry and leather, a bit weak mid-palate with a very clean and somewhat fizzy finish.”

I was describing a Dr. Pepper.

The statement “Everything’s good” is generally a bad sign. Unless it’s accompanied by a thorough description of two particular items that are the server’s personal favorites, in which case “everything’s good.”

Men - Attractive hostesses have been planted by the National Organization of Women as a test. Once you have been sat, avert your eyes at all cost.

The words fresh-made pasta at any Italian restaurant demands an automatic cheat day for anyone on Atkins, South Beach or the Zone.

Great steakhouses wish you would stop ordering the filet. The New York Strip, Ribeye and Porterhouse – that’s what they’d like you to have.

No, their margins are actually better on the filet, but your experience will be better with the rest. They really do care. Repeat business is their lifeblood.

You can never go wrong with the tasting menu. And yes, you will have the wine pairing.

Never order a Budweiser in an Irish pub.

When in a sushi bar, remember the three rules: 1. I’ll have whatever the chef would like to prepare 2. Sake would be fine and 3. The green stuff that looks like Play-Doh, it’s hot.

Volcano rolls are the chicken fingers of a sushi bar.

Great dining is in the details – an amuse bouche, a folded napkin upon return from the rest room, the sprig of fried parsley on top of your fish. The little things make all the difference.

Two things this town could use are a Tapas restaurant and a good brew pub. We have most everything else covered. BTW, a tapas brewpub is a bad idea - just in case any budding entrepreneurs thought they felt an ah-ha moment coming on.

There is no five second rule. It’s ten.

Osso Bucco, Pot Roast and other slow-roasted meats are highly underrated.

Everything tastes better with olive oil or butter. Same for salt. Asking for less of any is a ticket to disaster.

There is no middle ground when it comes to liver and onions, raw oysters and a dinner theatre.

Three drinks that will never go out of style: Sangria, a Tanqueray & Tonic, and a Slurpee. You may have to wait on the Slurpee.

Great Sauvignon Blancs are said to smell of freshly mown grass, citrus and cat pee. Feel free to share with your friends.

In Europe, they eat their salads after the entrée and have a cheese course for dessert. I like our way better, but they do have nice cheese carts.

Should you decide on dessert, I’ve yet to have a bad bread pudding.

When the night has been right, twenty percent should be the starting point. A little bit more tells them that you appreciate it. A lot more guarantees your next night there will be even better.

