

# Your rights

## Deprived of tips

Most restaurant chains deduct an admin fee to process credit card tips, Which? has found

**W**e contacted 15 restaurant chains and found that Strada and Café Rouge typically take 10% of credit card tips for admin and 'other house costs'. Among others, La Tasca, Pizza Express and Slug and Lettuce take 8% of all card tips to cover the cost of administering the tronc – the pool of tips left by customers, which is distributed to staff.

Chef and food writer Mitch Tonks told us: 'Restaurants should pay any administrative costs themselves... It seems like another way of making money. Tips should go straight to staff.'

If you're organising a work Christmas party, bear in mind that many restaurant chains add a service charge of 10% to 12.5% for group bookings of eight or more diners. Which? also discovered that a fifth of the Which? restaurant patrons we asked give a tip on top of paying a service charge.

*The Good Food Guide* consultant editor Elizabeth Carter advises: 'If you want to make sure the person serving you gets all of the gratuity, pay any service charge in cash. No one should tell you how much you should tip.'

Source: In October 2009, we surveyed 2,791 Which? online panel members about service charges.

### *Guest check*

Bill for party of 10 (£21.45 meal)	£214.50
Total with 10% service charge	£235.95
The tip you thought you were leaving	£21.45
How much of your tip staff will get	£19.31

Prices based on meal at Strada comprising a margarita, napoletana, dessert, espresso and house wine (£21.45)

## Xmas cards breach regulations

**A** Which? investigation has found that Harrods is selling charity Christmas cards that don't comply with regulations.

It's a legal requirement that cards indicate how much money is being donated to a charity. This information isn't available for some of the cards that are sold at Harrods, as the cards simply say: 'A contribution from the sale of this card goes towards...'

We decided to take a closer look at cards sold by Harrods after it failed to respond when we contacted leading retailers for our last issue's charity Christmas cards article (November 2009, p16).

A spokeswoman for Harrods told us: 'It is the manufacturer's responsibility to adhere to the requirements. Harrods works with reputable manufacturers and has strict guidelines to ensure they



meet those legal requirements.'

Harrods has temporarily withdrawn the cards from sale while it makes sure they're clear to customers.

Card Factory also didn't respond to last issue's query. Although the chain doesn't breach regulations and is donating a total of £1 million to charity over a two-year period, we found its cards to be confusing as you can't directly compare them with other retailers' cards.

See p77 to find out about Which? chief executive Peter Vicary-Smith's view on charity Christmas cards.

## Bags of charges

**B**aggage charges on no-frills carriers could add up to £120 to the price of a return airline ticket for a family of four.

Ryanair and EasyJet charge between £8 and £15 to check a bag into the hold. Prices on Bmibaby and Monarch can be as much as £14.99.

Costs could rise even further if you forget to pay for your luggage online. Ryanair charges £35 per

bag at the airport, while Bmibaby charges £20 per bag. Baggage allowances vary: Ryanair charges £20 per kilo in excess weight, EasyJet £10 per kilo.

Amanda Diamond from *Which? Holiday* warns hand luggage allowances also fluctuate: 'Make sure you know the carry-on allowance or you may have to check your bag into the hold and pay a fee. Most carriers have a 10kg limit, but bag dimensions vary.'

