



Are you being served?

Good service is the lifeblood of any restaurant, but what can the customer do if it goes wrong?

The subject of food – its pleasure, surprise and delight or dismay and disillusionment – remains very close to GFG readers' hearts, as the wealth of feedback *The Good Food Guide* editors receive can attest to. But your messages also reveal that service is an integral part of the restaurant experience.

Whether it's fulsome praise – 'The service we received should be noted as well. Very warm and slick. Rebooked for three weeks' time,' – or a complaint about 'competent cooking spoilt by poor staff attitude,' it is obvious that a waiter's skill has a lot to do with how much a meal is enjoyed. Just as fantastic service can overcome minor inadequacies in the food, poor or mediocre service can take the edge off brilliant cooking.

In June this year, a survey of more than 1,120 adults for the Taste of Britain food festival found that 45% of people were too embarrassed to voice a request in a restaurant, let alone complain if anything went wrong.

But eating out should not be an intimidating experience. Good service is a craft, one which many restaurants take seriously, with ongoing training and staff



The standard of service can make or break a dining experience

incentive schemes. However, things can still go wrong and, for the customer, complaining properly is an art form.

Here are five golden rules to ensure a successful restaurant experience.

- Keep your voice low and calm, but be firm.

- Avoid creating a scene in front of other customers, or your guests, which can put the restaurant on the defensive.

Instead, approach it as part of a deal between you and the restaurant and its staff to jointly create a great eating experience.

- Identify the manager, maitre d' or person who appears to be in

charge and take them aside quietly and state your case firmly.

- Complain immediately if things go wrong. Don't brood – act. If the soup is cold or the meat not done to your specification, say so there and then.

- Don't leave it until paying the bill to make a complaint – by then it may be too late for the restaurant to rectify the situation and you will walk away thinking it was all a horrible experience.

The ability of the discerning consumer to insist on standards by writing to *The Good Food Guide* also plays an important role, so many thanks to everyone who has written over the last year.

Worth the waiting

Restaurants from *The Good Food Guide* noted for good service

- **Artisan** 22 The Weir, Hessle, Yorkshire HU13 0RU, 01482 644906, www.artisanrestaurant.com

- **Cellar** 24 East Green, Anstruther, Fife, Scotland KY10 3AA, 01333 310378

- **Gordon Ramsay** 68-69 Royal Hospital Rd, London SW3 4HP, 020 7352 4441, www.gordonramsay.com

- **Hand and Flowers** 126 West Street, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 2BP, 01628 482277, www.thehandandflowers.co.uk

- **Ode** 21 Fore St, Shaldon, Devon TQ14 0DE, 0871 960 6037, www.odetruefood.co.uk

- **Tan-y-Foel Country House** Capel Garmon, Nr Betws-y-Coed, Wales LL26 0RE, 01690 710507, www.tyfhotel.co.uk

- **Sienna** 36 High West St, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UP, 01305 250022, www.siennarestaurant.co.uk

- **The Vineyard at Stockcross** Stockcross, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8JU, 01635 528770, www.the-vineyard.co.uk

Do you have something good or bad to say about a restaurant or its service?
Go to www.which.co.uk/gfgfeedback to let us know all about your experience.