



Ordering Off the Menu

Our beloved tablehopper offers tips for getting great service when something else in a restaurant catches your eye

A few friends who know me well know how much I love to flirt with waiters and bartenders, especially when I'm traveling. What's not to love about engaging hotties who are bringing you food, pouring you wine, and stirring up your Manhattan? Whether you have your eyes on a server or the chef, here are some ways to get their attention (and maybe some digits, or more, meow).

Bartender

If you want to get a bartender's attention, tip big, especially on your first drink. (Just drop \$10 or \$20 and leave it on the bar.) Call an obscure but fabulous spirit or vermouth. Compliment the drink they made you. Ask short, easy-to-answer questions, since they usually have to help a lot of people at once. If it's later in the evening and you have good patter, offer to buy them a drink. (Or come back a couple nights later and do it — and get there toward the end of their shift.) And if you're crushing hard on one, just remember, you're not the only one in their stable.



Server

Let's be honest here: Any good server is going to pay a lot of attention to you and possibly be a bit flirty because, hey, there's the opportunity to get upwards of 25 percent of your bill out of you. But it's a mutually beneficial game, because good service can make your meal really memorable, and if you're a sweetheart, they might even style with you a free app or a little dessert wine at the end. So it goes without saying, tip big. Make sure you have their name so you can be seated in their section the next time you make a reservation. And if you're looking to close the deal, just ask where they like to go for a drink after their shift, and suggest that you can meet them there (although you should try to score some intel from someone else who works there if they're single — server flirting can be a tough one to read).

Sommelier

If your taste runs to the intellectual and geeky side of the spectrum, the sommelier can be a good fit for you. If you have a cutie on your hands, try to engage them from the outset: Ask which wines they're really excited about on the list. Inquire for more details on the producer. Show you're adventurous. Ply them with questions so they can show off their big brain. If you order a bottle — especially if it's something special — offer a taste (not from your glass, that's an amateur move — let them pour their own, or pour it for them). If you're a regular (and a wine collector), you could bring in a bottle of something really special or rare and offer them a glass — or more. As for closing the deal, tell them you'd love their advice on building your home cellar — and then invite them over to see it.



Chef

You sure you want to chase this one? Unless there's an open kitchen or the chef is at the pass, he/she could be hard to engage with — but you can always ask your server if you could get a quick tour of the kitchen at the end of the night, and then thank the chef and crew for the amazing meal. Calling a chef to your table can be dicey (they're busy), but you can say, "I am so in love with this dish. If the chef has a quick moment to come out at all, I'd love to thank them in person." The best way to a chef's heart? Buy the kitchen a round of beers at the end of the night.



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