STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Restaurant Customer Complaint SOP

Document no.	SOP-RST-006
Revision	1.0
Owner	General Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To resolve guest complaints quickly and fairly while they are still in the restaurant, and to learn from recurring issues to prevent them happening again.

2. Scope

Applies to complaints raised in person, by phone or through online reviews about food, service or the restaurant experience. Food safety incidents follow the kitchen's own procedures in addition to this SOP.

Definitions

Service recovery	The action taken to make a guest experience right after something has gone wrong, such as a remake, discount or comped item.
Comp	Removing the charge for an item or the full check as a gesture of goodwill.
Authority level	The value of a comp or discount a staff member can approve without manager sign-off.

3. Responsibilities

Server	Listens to the complaint, offers a resolution within their authority level, and escalates anything beyond it.
Shift Manager	Handles escalated complaints, approves larger comps, and logs the incident.
General Manager	Reviews the complaint log for patterns and follows up on serious or repeated issues.

RACI matrix

Activity	Server	Shift Manager	General Manager
Listen to the guest and acknowledge the issue	R/A	I	-
Offer a resolution within authority level	R	A	I
Approve a comp above server authority	C	R/A	I
Log the complaint and resolution	R	A	I
Review complaint trends and follow up	I	C	R/A

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Complaint log or CRM
- Comp and discount authority chart
- POS system for processing comps
- Guest follow-up contact list where available

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Listen without interrupting** When a guest raises a complaint, stop what you are doing, make eye contact, and let them fully explain the issue before responding.	Server	☐
5.2	**Acknowledge the issue and apologize** Repeat the issue back in your own words to confirm you understood it, and apologize for the guest's experience without making excuses or blaming the kitchen. **Checkpoint:** The guest hears an acknowledgment and apology before any solution is offered.	Server	☐
5.3	**Ask what resolution the guest would like** Ask the guest what would make things right, since their expectation is often smaller than what staff assume, and note their answer before deciding on a fix.	Server	☐
5.4	**Offer a fix within your authority level** For issues within your authority, such as remaking a dish or a small discount, offer the fix immediately without needing to check with a manager.	Server	☐
5.5	**Escalate issues beyond your authority** For a larger comp, a refund, or a complaint you cannot resolve, bring the shift manager to the table promptly rather than guessing at a solution. **Warning:** Never promise a comp or discount beyond your authority level before checking with a manager.	Server	☐
5.6	**Take ownership of the escalated complaint** The shift manager introduces themselves at the table, listens to the issue directly from the guest, and confirms the resolution before it is applied.	Shift Manager	☐
5.7	**Apply the agreed resolution promptly** Process the comp, discount, or remake in the POS right away, and make sure the kitchen or bar is notified immediately if a remake is needed.	Shift Manager	☐
5.8	**Check back after the resolution** Return to the table a short time after the fix is delivered to confirm the guest is now satisfied before moving on. **Checkpoint:** The guest confirms satisfaction with the resolution before the table moves on.	Server	☐
5.9	**Log the complaint and resolution** Record the date, table, nature of the complaint, and the resolution given in the complaint log, including the value of any comp.	Shift Manager	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.10	**Respond to complaints received by phone or online** Respond to a phone complaint or online review promptly and professionally, offering to make it right, and log it the same way as an in-person complaint.	Shift Manager	☐
5.11	**Notify the kitchen or bar of the root cause** If the complaint points to a specific dish, preparation issue or drink recipe, tell the kitchen or bar lead so the root cause can be addressed, not just the individual complaint.	Shift Manager	☐
5.12	**Review complaint trends periodically** The general manager reviews the complaint log periodically to spot recurring issues by dish, server or time of day, and follows up with training or menu changes.	General Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every complaint includes an acknowledgment and apology before a solution is offered.
- Resolutions beyond a server's authority are escalated to the shift manager.
- Every complaint and resolution is logged the same day it happens.
- A check-back confirms guest satisfaction after the resolution is delivered.

7. Records

- Complaint log with resolution and comp value
- Comp and discount authority chart
- Online review responses

8. KPIs

- Number of complaints per week by category
- Average time from complaint to resolution
- Percent of complaints resolved without manager escalation
- Repeat complaints about the same dish or issue

9. Common mistakes

- Interrupting the guest or arguing before hearing the full complaint.
- Offering a comp or discount beyond authority level without checking with a manager.
- Fixing the immediate complaint but never logging it, so patterns go unnoticed.
- Skipping the check-back, leaving the manager unsure if the guest is actually satisfied.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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