STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Restaurant Host and Seating SOP

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Revision	1.0
Owner	General Manager
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To greet every guest promptly, manage waitlist and reservation flow accurately, and seat tables in a way that spreads workload fairly across servers.

2. Scope

Applies to the host stand, waitlist and reservation management, and the seating process from the door to the table. Table-side service after seating is covered by the steps of service SOP.

Definitions

Section rotation	Seating new tables in a set order across servers so each one gets a fair share of tables and sales.
Turn time	The estimated time a table will be occupied, used to quote accurate waitlist times.
Walk-in	A guest who arrives without a reservation.

3. Responsibilities

Host	Greets guests, manages the waitlist and reservation list, and seats tables following section rotation.
Server	Confirms section status with the host and flags when a section should be paused or resumed.
Shift Manager	Resolves waitlist disputes, adjusts section rotation for uneven table sizes, and supports large party seating.

RACI matrix

Activity	Host	Server	Shift Manager
Greet guests at the door	R/A	-	I
Manage the waitlist and quote wait times	R/A	I	C
Seat tables following section rotation	R/A	C	I
Pause or resume a server's section	C	R	A
Seat and coordinate large	R	C	A

Activity	Host	Server	Shift Manager
parties			

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

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Host stand with menus
- Waitlist and reservation app
- Floor plan and section rotation chart
- Highchairs and booster seats
- Pager system if used for the waitlist

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Greet guests within seconds of arrival** Make eye contact and greet arriving guests as soon as they enter, even if you are finishing another task, so no one stands unacknowledged at the door. **Checkpoint:** Guests are greeted within a few seconds of stepping through the door.	Host	☐
5.2	**Confirm party size and any special needs** Ask the party size and check for special needs such as a highchair, wheelchair access or a specific seating preference before checking availability.	Host	☐
5.3	**Check reservations before adding to the waitlist** Confirm whether the party has a reservation and check them in, or add walk-ins to the waitlist app if no table is immediately open.	Host	☐
5.4	**Quote an accurate wait time** Estimate the wait using current table turn times and the number of parties ahead in the queue, and give the guest a realistic quote rather than guessing low.	Host	☐
5.5	**Update the waitlist as tables turn** Update the waitlist app as tables are seated or cleared, and notify waiting parties promptly by pager or name when their table is ready.	Host	☐
5.6	**Seat tables following section rotation** Seat each new party in the next open section in the rotation order, rather than favoring a server or section based on personal preference. **Checkpoint:** New tables are seated in rotation order across open sections, not concentrated on one server.	Host	☐
5.7	**Confirm a section's open or paused status** Check with each server at the start of the shift and periodically during service whether their section is open, paused for a large ticket, or ready for more tables.	Server	☐
5.8	**Adjust rotation for uneven table sizes** When a server is seated with an unusually large party or several tables at once, the shift manager adjusts the rotation so other servers get the next tables.	Shift Manager	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.9	**Escort guests and present menus** Walk guests to their table at a comfortable pace, pull out chairs for children or guests who need help, and place a menu in front of each guest.	Host	☐
5.10	**Hand off the table to the server** Introduce the assigned server by name if they are nearby, or make sure the server is aware a new table has been seated in their section.	Host	☐
5.11	**Coordinate seating for large parties** For parties above the size that a single server section can handle well, work with the shift manager to combine tables or assign extra support before seating the group.	Host	☐
5.12	**Resolve a waitlist dispute calmly** If a guest disputes their position on the waitlist, calmly show the list or app, explain the estimate, and involve the shift manager if the guest remains upset.	Shift Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Guests are greeted within a few seconds of arrival on spot checks.
- Waitlist quotes are within the accuracy target compared to actual seating time.
- New tables are distributed evenly across open sections.
- Highchairs, boosters and special seating needs are ready before the guest is seated.

7. Records

- Waitlist and reservation app history
- Section rotation chart
- Guest complaint notes related to seating or wait times

8. KPIs

- Average greeting time from door to acknowledgment
- Waitlist quote accuracy
- Section table count variance across servers per shift
- Guest complaints related to seating or waitlist

9. Common mistakes

- Letting guests wait at the door without acknowledgment while finishing another task.
- Seating several new tables in a row on the same server out of rotation order.
- Quoting an overly optimistic wait time to avoid disappointing guests.
- Forgetting to check for a highchair or accessibility need before seating a party.

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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